

immigrant housewife
tends her indoor plants

in this winter land
in a marriage of her discontent
and a generic house that
no neighbour envies
(waiting for elusive cashflow
that just might allow
the coveted jacuzzi
framed by fake onyx
in tones of purple)
she tends assiduously her indoor garden

with shears and clippers of many sizes
expertly pulled out of copious
pockets of her plaid robe
she prunes and snips the touchy
unruly plants each with its own
season for ritual emasculation
and teases tropical orchids into
stunning blooms nourished mainly
by tepid tap water filtered light
and the timely nipping of
every untamed regenerative urge
scrupulously following the latest
knowhow annually recycled
in glossy house-plant manuals
and cheerful articles in sunday papers

meanwhile her disconsolate mind
mixing desire and delusion
travels back to the distant “home”
—a paradise by now quite firmed up
through nostalgic chats on the cellular
with other sensitive exiles-in-matrimony—

where bears drunk on delectable *mohua*-flower honey
romp around happy abodes of extended families
at night to liven up granduncles'
fabulous storytelling punctuated
by patter of monsoon showers
and wild wind rushing in at open windows
(in that land of cross-ventilated rooms)
carrying heavy fragrance of jasmines

sighing deeply she trains
her misting bottle on the delicate
green charges, and decimates
noxious foreign pests
with a patriotic zap of the reliable
house and garden bug killer
and trims and tacks the horticultural sails
of her domestic ship keeping it
on an impossible even keel
steering knowledgeable oceans of science and art
heroically determined on denying
this frozen greenless continent

lacking refreshing well-water
she makes do with a hot shower
and mere *jean naté* afterbath splash
then lying on a queensized bed
safely away from her pared down spouse
finally she snuggles home in the strong arms
of *bombay matinee* idols (videos
rented at the ethnic grocer's)
and falls happily asleep assured
by hard manly mouths searing
with cigar and whisky fumes
kissing her in a fitting finale
amidst her very own *anthurium*
christmas cacti and fiery *callistemons*

SHYAMAL BAGCHEE