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## Love, Rain and the Buddha

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Up the hill they climbed,  
Taking the narrow path,  
Treading on grass and rubble,  
Wet with the morning dew;  
The cool breeze heralding autumn  
Waved them welcome,  
Sunlight strewn like flowers  
Fallen from the wayside trees.

Up the hill they went  
Stepping on stones,  
Jumping across dry beds  
Of streams and rapids,  
Tasting honey of wild flowers,  
Plucking and eating  
Succulent wild berries,  
Listening to song birds,  
Watching peacocks dancing  
Their picturesque feathers  
Spread in full glory  
As if to greet them.

The hilltop they reached by noon,  
Hungry and exhausted,  
The cool breeze now ceased,  
Clouds slowly moving  
From the other side of the hill.

Sitting on the stones  
Of the old, abandoned  
Buddha temple,  
They ate their lunch,  
Leaned on the wall  
And soon fell into a slumber.

A flash of lightning  
Followed by heavy thunder  
Woke the duo, even as  
Large raindrops fell on them.  
They took shelter  
Inside the roofless temple,  
Behind the large idol of Buddha,

Seated on a stone platform,  
Enigmatic smile on his face,  
Smooth and well-chiselled.

Clasping each other,  
Tighter and tighter every time  
Lightning flashed,  
Thunder descended,  
They felt there were none else  
In this wide world.

Then, lightning and thunder ceased,  
And rain subsided,  
Like the descending notes of Bhairavi,\*  
Sung soulfully by a maestro.

The Sun reappeared in the sky,  
Shining bright and unhindered  
Right on the hilltop.

Putting out their clothes to dry,  
To save their nudity  
From the peering eyes of the Sun,  
The young ones covered each other,  
Dissolved into each other,  
Sitting on the stone ledge,  
Lying on the wet stone floor  
And leaning on the back of Buddha,  
Until, exhausted, they fell asleep.

Loud cooing of a peacock ,  
Just outside the temple,  
Woke them to their senses.

Putting on the clothes,  
They looked at the Buddha,  
*Rain-washed, resplendent,*  
His enigmatic smile,  
They felt, had turned indulgent.

Standing in front of the idol  
The duo clicked a selfie  
And hurried down the hill;

Their limbs light,

And mind floating on waves of ecstasy,  
They felt the whole world embracing them  
In pure delight.

\*\*\* \*\*

Never came to their mind  
Next day's college elections  
Wherein each contested  
On opposing side,  
Nor that their parents  
Were of different faiths  
And from disparate  
Economic strata.

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- \*A raga in carnatic music