

Impact Factor: 8.67

ISSN:0976-8165



THE CRITERION

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL IN ENGLISH

Bi-Monthly Peer-Reviewed eJournal



YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

VOL. 17 ISSUE-1, FEBRUARY 2026

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor: Dr. Madhuri Bite

www.the-criterion.com

We Worship Difference (Just Not Me)

Illikkal Gillie K Jayaprakashan

You say this land breathes diversity.

I say, then why do I hold my breath when I walk?

You touch my feet for blessings,
then wipe your hands on your clothes.

You want my claps at your child's birth,
not my presence in your classroom,
your office,
your neighbour's house.

You kneel before a god who is half woman, half man
but when I appear whole as myself,
you ask me to disappear.

Ardhanarishvara is revered
while I am reduced to paperwork errors.
Shikhandi is heroic
while I am asked to justify my existence daily.

This is not acceptance.
This is ritualized inclusion without rights.

Do not quote scriptures to me.
I live in the footnotes of your faith.

You made my body sacred in stories
and dangerous in real life.
You turned mythology into comfort
and my existence into inconvenience.

I am not confusion.

I am not comedy.

I am not your weekend charity.

If difference is divine,
stop worshipping it only in stone.

Look at me.

Say my name.

Let your faith survive the test of my presence.

I do not seek sanctification.

I seek continuity:
of shelter, of safety, of recognition
beyond myth and moment.

A society that worships multiplicity
must answer -Why it fears me ?

Bio Note:

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The poet is a research scholar based in India whose work engages with gender, identity, and lived experience at the margins of society. As a hijra scholar, she brings an embodied perspective to academic inquiry, combining personal insight with critical analysis. Her research focuses on transgender autobiographies in India, examining themes of gender dysphoria, structural violence, exclusion, resistance, and self-representation.