

The **BTB** Chronicles





The BTB Chronicles

Edition 2: October 2019



Featuring 10 poems on the theme "Festival" and 10 100-Word-Stories from
#LetsMakeStories - an initiative by Writer Meera Barath

Curated by: Anupama Dalmia

Edited by: Anupama Dalmia & Vivaan Turakhia

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Featured Poets

Reya Jain
Saumaya Gupta
Ananya Alope
Rishika Thakur
Maneet Gulati Ahuja
Namratha Varadharajan
Babita Saraf Kejriwal
Manpreet Chadha
Riddhi Katira Bhatti
Preeti Choudhary

Featured 100-Word-Story Writers

Preethi Warriar
Riddhi Katira Bhatti
Mrinalinee Patro
Natasha Sequeira
Deepti Sharma
Sonal Singh
Moushumi Bhattacharjee
Sheetal Ashpalia
Nandita De
Kanakagiri Shakuntala



From the Founder's Diary

What comes to your mind when I say "Festival"?

Religion?

Prayers?

Mythology?

Family and Friends?

Love and Togetherness?

Traditions?

Food?

In India, apart from our culture, our diversity comes through also in the way each of us perceives the festive time. Personally, I am not a religious person in the conventional sense of the word. I believe in the divine power but I have my own ways of connecting to it. Hence, though am not on the ball when it comes to our traditions, I love to participate in the festivities and create beautiful memories. To me, festivals are about

spending quality time with loved ones and indulging in lip-smacking delicacies. It's about how the festivals make us feel over how we choose to celebrate them.



Anupama Dalmia
Founder & Chief Mentor
Beyond the Box

In this edition of BTB Chronicles, Beyond the Box proudly presents 10 soulful and fascinating poems penned by 10 brilliant young and adult poets. These poems bring forth varied and interesting interpretations on the theme of "Festival".

We are also delighted to collaborate with Writer Meera Barath and 10 selected 100-word-stories from her uber talented #LetsMakeStories Battalion find a place in this edition.

Festivals – A Symbol Of Our Diversity

by Reya Jain, 9 years old

Our culture, our way;
Our beauty, our day.

As the Indian Festivals arrive swaying in through the year,
Decorations glitter all around and our hearts rejoice with no fear.
Prayers, food, love and laughter;
Festivals spread happiness as we get together.

January starts with flying kites,
It's harvest time as Sankranti arrives.
March welcomes us with Holi colours,
And the fun and vibrancy builds friendships even with strangers.

Vacation time comes mid-year after a wait that is quite long;
Raksha Bandhan in August makes the sibling bond strong.
Lord Ganesha then visits us and gives us strength to face every obstacle;
Dussehra is when the burning of evil we witness as a spectacle.

The fireworks and diyas during Diwali bring a happy sparkle;
The brightness and lights all around make my eyes twinkle.
Last but never the least, Santa makes his entry;
Jingling with Santa we rejoice and make merry.

We celebrate all festivals in this diverse culture;
This is the beauty of India which ties us together.



Festival: Fun, Frolic, Food

by Saumaya Gupta, 12 years old

Festivals bring joy and merriment;
They brighten up the whole environment.
This is the time when foe becomes a friend;
The celebrations are an opportunity for broken relations to amend.

Holi comes with a splash of colours;
Smeared in hues of love and hate, we enjoy the herald of summer.
Baisakhi is the time to harvest what farmers cultivate;
With beating of drums and Bhangra folk dance, they celebrate.

Eid is when we visit the Mosque to pray;
Allah is remembered with love and faith on this day.
Independence Day reminds us of a new dawn,
Raksha Bandhan celebrates the sibling's eternal bond.

Karwa Chauth, a jamboree when married women observe fast;
Clad with bangles and Henna, they celebrate love for their husbands which is immeasurable and vast.
Diwali, a carnival of diyas, lights and crackers;
Not to forget the delicious meals that every person savours.
Christmas, a call when Santa is here;
It's the day when soothing hymns and carols fill the atmosphere.
My India is enriched with celebrations and relations;
I am proud to be a citizen of this diverse Nation.



Festival Of My Dreams

by Ananya Alope, 15 years old

Festival of my dreams?

Let me tell you if you really want to hear.

Festival of my dreams,

Is when my heart beams.

When the houses are shining,

And for sweets the kids are whining.

Festival of my dreams,

Is when there is peace.

No crackers! Only games;

What! Does this sound lame?

Festival of my dreams,

Is when there is delicious food on a platter.

Sweets come first for the foodie in me,

Which I relish along with random chatter.

Bua's Samosas and Gulab Jamuns are mind-blowing,

But it is a torture to see on Facebook the pictures of her cooking.

Bua! Why are you in Canada?

Oh! Are you leaving? Ok Good-Bye!

Is everyone gone?

No! Not newspapers and books.

But the...the...festival of my dreams...



Festivals Of My Heart

by Rishika Thakur, 15 years old

The multihued festivals of my heart,
Mark all the new ventures that I confidently start.
Every fresh start invokes a sea of feelings,
Celebrating it makes it all the more appealing.

The festivals of my heart help me understand,
How people come together and lend a hand.
They aid and they help to build a new dream,
No matter how impossible it may initially seem.

The festivals of my heart do trumpet out loud,
Whenever my success does everyone proud.
They call for a celebration, a coming together,
Raising a toast to my next, exciting endeavour.

The festivals of my heart do acknowledge,
How far I've come and enhanced my knowledge.
They salute the past that has made me who I am,
They hail my place in life, where I currently stand.

The festivals of my heart make me burst with pride,
At my accomplishments, the triumphs in my stride.
They give me hope for everything I'm slated to endure,
Confidently, I know I will overcome, I am that sure!

• The festivals of my heart celebrate the tiny joys,
• They put me at ease and let me enjoy.
• They eliminate my sorrow and make me realize,
• That time is transient, sorrow will eventually fly.

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A Handful Of Lamps

by Maneet Gulati Ahuja

For a handful of lamps, she trots,
With feet swollen and aching tendon knots.
To faraway villages, sequestered and remote,
Sweaty palms, withered, parched lips, connote.

What an arduous ordeal, it has been,
To procure a few, the chances seem very lean.
Addled, surprised, many seem bemused,
Cogitate, over the purpose, for which the lamps will be used.

With no festival approaching anytime soon,
Daft for lamps, they mock her, as if she were a buffoon.
The hushed whispers, the drollery,
Caring for none, she ignores all mockery.

Relentlessly, tirelessly, she searches,
And then, she spots a potter's wheel among the birches.
Imploring, begging, with welled up eyes,
Emptying her pocket, for a handful of lamps, she cries.

Illuminating every corner, every nook,
With her gaze, glued to the door, eyes yearning for his look.
Donning the soldier's uniform, he arrives;
Her heart spills with mirth, akin to the joy of nine lives.

Like a festival she celebrates, and the ache recoils,
When, guarding the frontiers, the sons of the soil.
To the laps of their mothers, return
To rejoice, to celebrate, a handful of lamps burn



A New Tradition

by Namratha Varadharajan

I saw a procession of plaster of paris Idols abandoned by the river;
Our beloved God left to fend for himself,
soaked to the bones in the pouring rain.

I saw a beautiful display of lights in the sky
diligently accompanied by a cacophony of whooping cough,
in every child, yours and mine.

I saw the halls decked lavishly;
The next morning a man with a prick bursting balloons one by one,
And a hundred black overflowing bags leaving the venue.

How to create destruction, waste, disease
Is that the grand legacy of our festivals?
Is this the tradition we wish to pass on?

Oh! Let us join to create new traditions today;
Celebrations that do not create waste.
A silver or clay idol, a diya for our porch;
A few tweeks, lots of fun, love, music and twirls,
Happiness galore.

And then we shall realize we aren't creating any new tradition, no new legacy;
We just rediscovered how our beautiful festivals are meant to be.



My Diwali

by Babita Saraf Kejriwal

You have beautifully
Lit up my soft heart-
Added a serene glow
To each and every part.

Warm light of a thousand,
Lamps shine all around;
Everywhere there is
Love's magical sweet sound.

Many festive crackers,
Explode vibrantly within me;
After you lovingly
Came into my destiny.

The sweetness of desserts
On me you poured,
Over a tender wave of devotion,
My heart magically soared.

On all other auspicious occasions
You're on my mind too,
My life is a sparkling festival
Because of - you!



Celebrating SHE

by Manpreet Chadha

Festoons, balloons, flowers, streamers
Adorned every inch of space every corner
The house wore a resplendent bridal look
Decked up, illuminated, your breath it took

In dainty dresses little Snow Whites waited
In chic tuxedos Peter Pans stood excited
Waving pom-poms they lined up the porch
Their ears pricked to pick sounds of approach
O! What a delightful sight it was to behold
What the occasion was, it must be told

Beaming with elation SHE finally stepped in
To the beating of drums and tambourine
A red carpet rolled out petals paved her path
A blessed gift to the home SHE had brought
Yes it was their bundle of joy and laughter
Their first born, a cute cherubic daughter

O! What a festival to celebrate girl child
My heart is still brimming with pride
I wish every home could make such stride
To fight the bane of female foeticide

• A corner of my eye sometimes wets with tear
• At certain community's regressive behaviour
• Where birth of a daughter they do thus deride:
• 'The servant of the house has arrived'



Festivities Of Life

by Riddhi Katira Bhatti

How life celebrates in its own charming ways,
 Spirit of festivities lies in moments, not days.
 How fervour and cheers sprout in sullen heart,
 As a lost life comes riding a shimmery cart.

A soldier comes home from the war;
 The wife's eyes dazzle like a million stars.
 A thousand lamps illuminate her life;
 Diwali is thence, affirms the delirious wife.

A seedless womb barren for years;
 A dainty colorful flower blooms in there.
 How hues of rainbow splatter on life's canvas white;
 Holi is when one immerses in colors bright.

In a cold dank winter covered in white,
 A homeless child sees scintillating red light.
 A warm embrace shields him from cold storm;
 Christmas is when a lost child reaches home.

Independence Day is to a labourer saved from oppression;
 As Easter is to a man walking alive out of fatal operation;
 Fineries, sweets and presents don't make up the festivals,
 It's the lustre of life, through filters, that creates the sparkles.



Soul Satiating Festivals

by Preeti Choudhary

Rich social heritage effect a happy life,
As an objective mix of customs and traditions,
Commingle with attitudes, folklore and festivals.
To educate entrenched angst and distress,
Observe the magical existence of God.

Festivals help manifesting the fiery power,
Gently enriching knowledge and offering enlightenment,
In relishing the light of lucidity and liberation.
To bring about the bright side to life,
Relieve anxiety by mitigating disharmony.

Festivals contribute to nation building,
Involving religion, social and nature;
Elevating cultural, economic and political state.

Festivals evoke the feeling of cohesion,
To be in reverence and gratitude,
Towards earth, that we walk upon,
Towards the air that that we breath in,
Towards the water that we drink,
Towards the food that we eat,
Towards the people with whom we interact,
Towards our own bodies and perceptions,
Leading to success and victory of soul and intellect.



100-Word-Stories

#LetsMakeStories is the brainchild of a wonderful writer, Meera Barath.

Though on the face of it, this initiative is a weekly 100-word-story writing contest, there is so much more to it. By giving the writers a unique writing prompt every week, Meera's intention is to give a fuel to their imagination and bring out the best from within them. The idea is to encourage each other and build a strong community of writers because we rise the most when we rise together.

Keeping this very thought in mind, Beyond the Box has collaborated with Meera to give gifted writers an additional platform to showcase their work. We are sure BTB Chronicles subscribers will love these selected 100-word-stories as much as we have.



Meera Barath

Writer & Storyteller



Sail Away!!

By Preethi Warriar

She picks up the model ship, a souvenir from his first assignment. Barely an adult, he had stepped into the bread winner's shoes. Far away at sea, toiling endlessly, he had uplifted his impoverished family.

"Enough, I'm returning," he had declared.

"Not till your youngest sister is married." She had sent him back.

Today, she bids him farewell again, as she immerses the urn into the ocean. She silently apologizes as he descends into the abyss. Her son is paying for her greed.

"Captain Awarded for Bravery posthumously. Sacrificed himself to foil a pirate attack." the newspapers echo the next day.

The Messiah

by Riddhi Katira Bhatti

'Another attempted rape in the woods foiled.' the headlines read.

"My saviour was a man in hood." told the victim.

The forests of Jind, infamous for girls' abductions and rapes, were turning safe again, thanks to this mysterious man.

Some called him messiah and some good ghost. But no one really knew any more.

Away from prying eyes, a man removed his black cloak and burst into insolent tears clutching his daughter's picture against his chest. She was raped and murdered in the same woods two years back.

When authorities failed to ensure daughters' safety, the distressed father took it upon himself.



Pass On The Baton!

By Mrinalinee Patro

Desirous of an act of benevolence to sweep across,
Sanguine that philanthropy keeps us engross.

Only a cruel mirage, let not humanity and faith be,
Create a fraternity that endorses goodwill with utter intensity.

Steal a moment, snatch a minute from the thunderous schedule;
"A daily dose of kindness" should be the thumb rule.

Transforming the heart into a mirror sans any ambiguity,
That radiates and reciprocates only positivity and amity.

A gentle smile, an adorable pat and a warm hug, pass on the baton,
To one and all you meet, as you race ahead in life's marathon.

Roar

by Natasha Sequeira

Gliding, moving, sliding,
She walked through the thicket.
'Hush' - did she hear a sound?
Or was it her heart just ticking?
She thought of her young ones at home;
And feared for their life and hers.

For she was a lone warrior,
She had to bring home the bread, minus fear!
'Aah' she felt the pain!
The dart and then the bullet.
They had aimed for the jugular, the pain, she
couldn't bear it!
She roared, she roared, she roared.



Amma's Tales

by Sonal Singh

'Amma, why does the sky sparkle at night?'

'Beta, the millions of stars are working to make your dreams come true.'

'Really Amma?'

'Of course! Now close your eyes and sleep. Let the stars do their work.'

The little boy smiled.

'Amma, why does the sun shine?'

'The sun shines to show you the right path.'

'Really Amma, just for me?'

'Of course! Have you ever got lost during the day?' 'No Amma, never.'

'See, the sun works for you.' The little boy smiled again.

Unbeknownst to him, Amma was his sun and stars, his guide.

The Façade

by Deepti Sharma

Everyday like a dusty storm on a sweltering June morning, he would rise to this nonchalant world. A loner, a bohemian, with long hair tied up in a bun, a tattoo of Lord Ardhnareeshwar on the nape of his neck. Allusions of his erudite yet gentle masculinity made girls lose air in their lungs.

But as the saffron orb went down the horizon, his baggage drained him, angels disowned him. Spreading out his demoniac wings, he would strip down his dreary pretence, let his hair down, wear ghungaroos in his feet, and let out a cry of weighed down femininity.



Trash In The Bin

by Moushumi Bhattacharjee

She sat there crestfallen
Her emotions were adrift in wilderness
The wicked night engulfed her perceptions
None to lean on but her traumatized soul
A while ago he pronounced
No more did he feel any emotion
Umpteenth time he voiced 'sorry'
Begged to efface all her confusion
Swallowing humiliation, hiding her tears
She came running to this forlorn junction
Loveless earthly belongings in a valise
Bewildered which way to look for destination
The earth felt like throne of thorns
She lost everything once that was her own
Whilom she was his red rose
Now just a trash in his bin.



The Sentinel

by Nandita De

It was a time of danger. The air was thick with fear. Distrust smothered every beating heart. People waited tensely. Pallor of gloom had descended. Roads were deserted. The town was terrified.

Destiny had flung itself on a cliff-hanger. Poor, vulnerable, populace were at the crossroads; threatened by invaders and irrational hatred.

But deep in his retreat, in terrifying silence, a shadowy form sat ominously still, every muscle of his face strained. The headman had been silent for long. Finally, he looked up. His eyes shone with stern resolve. 'A lion looks after his territory,' he softly said. Command issued, the ground force winged out.

The Guest

by Sheetal Ashpalia

"Hiss"

There it was again. Martha thought she had imagined it, but now she was sure that there was something lurking in Jack's room. She had decided to clean it on a whim while he was away at school.

She traced the sound which came from under his bed. There, she found an old shoebox that she thought she had discarded earlier and got the biggest surprise of her life.

"Jack, look what I found today in your room. A guest!" Martha cried.

And she held up the bearded dragon lizard in her hand.

Jack's sheepish grin said it all.



When Silence Speaks Louder Than Words

by Kanakagiri Shakuntala

Winter just setting in, cold and misty nights;
Calm and quietude settling around the street lights

Shutters down, streetlights scattering ghostly reflections,
Deserted streets, a lone soul walking around in contemplation.

Wandering in search of his son who left home,
Over his father's harried and vexed overtone.

Dejected and about to return, saw a young man, forlorn
On the blurry streets; haggard and woebegone.

Joy knew no bounds, evident in his excited pace,
The two hugged silently,
Tears rolling down their face.

If silence could speak volumes,
Their cuddle said it all.
The bear hug bringing calm after the squall.



BTB Announcements

As we expand horizons, our team is growing too.

This month, 14-year-old Vivaan Turakhia has joined us as our Content Specialist. He will be actively working on all the content driven Beyond the Box initiatives.



We welcome Vivaan Turakhia as Content Specialist

Vivaan is a typical 14-year-old who has learnt to balance academics and fun to the fullest. A student of Dhirubhai Ambani International School, Vivaan is a curious learner quenching his thirst for knowledge.

He loves trying new things, may it be food or other experiences and loves to socialize with his dear ones, making him very enthusiastic among them.

His hobbies include listening to music, reading, watching movies and deep sea diving.



Contact information:

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