

Epilepsy

—*you were careless*

father's

fist clenched

grips

the queen-

sized wooden bed's

(edge)

as old as

my mother's marriage

don't

kids slide down beds

don't they

she was barely a few months old

mother says

— earliest epilepsy cache 1979

my last seizure july 19th 2024

i am a month shy of forty-nine now

worst post-seizure memory

perhaps i was seven or ten when

papa for me consulted with a neurologist in

manochikitsa vibhag

department for diseases of the mind at

mathuradas mathur hospital jodhpur

step outside

the young male neurologist generously asked

my father outside
i inside
doctor i table between
in this large gray room
don't be afraid he said
 [REDACTED] is someone bothering you
and i knew
what he meant [REDACTED]
 my father outside
i angry hurt
spared papa what the doctor said

one whole week
they gave me prescription mazitol
i didn't know why
my feet felt
as if floating
an inch above asphalt
eventhough i saw them feet
graze ground below
i seized
my mother's fingers
in the *mandi* market street
i knew no words to describe
my feeling as if
i was in a far-off territory robbed off their dialect

i never re-visited the doctor
who prescribed me mazitol

exhausted writing about my years with epilepsy
wait at least four years seasoned editors advise

but almost fifty years since i was diagnosed
and this is the first time my fingers race on the keyboard

hindi is my native tongue i shudder even thinking about my seizures in my mother tongue
a foreign lexicon has liberated me so much agency i had fallen in love with
the poet t s eliot and the romantic john keats and the irish james joyce and i
a green writer decided to study english literature since she was smitten by shakespearean plays
objective correlative negative capability narrative distance
joyce too had to leave ireland to write about her about him in her

थर्रातर जब मन कोमल उंगललयरं ललखत | **मिर्गि मिगी**

मरनो जैसे कोई मर् ही गय हो

सन्नरटर छर जरतर यदि ककस को लमगी कर आ जरतर **दौरा**

दौरा जैसे की हृिय की धडकन थम ही गय हो

कुछ संवरि सिर हते है **गुप्त**

गुप्त ही अँधेरे में ओझल हो जरते है

ऐसर ही एक रंज है ये लमगी कर **दौरा**

दौरा कयर हुआ जैसे चुडैल केचंगुल में मैं फंस गय हू

हूँह जूतर सुघरओ लमगी केमर्ीज को ऐसर मैंने लोगों को बोलते सुनर है ¹

alternative therapies define epilepsy

a psychosomatic ailment

dis-ease originating in the mind reflected in the body

मन the mind mind you is not synonymous

with दिमरग the brain

mind is चित्त chitta in yoga ayurveda

think of the mind-chitta

as a camera its action comparable

to a timelapse

chitta-mind does not discriminate

it records everything it perceives

it perceives not just through a lens

a lens is the only receiver in a camera

chitta camera-s in through five senses

~~ears that hear~~

कर्त्ता कर्ते श्रवर्

~~tongue that tastes~~

ज व्हर चखत

~~nose that smells~~

नरलसकर संघत

in the चित्त mind as

~~eyes that see~~

चक्षु कर्ते ववर्चर्

~~skin that touches~~

चमा कर्त महसूस

these perceptions are stored

संस्कर्त् impressions

HOLD ON

chitta captures impressions of all sorts

it hoards them

an overload which could also mean

an individual collecting
images in mind across multiple past
reincarnations crossing current life

IN SIMPLE TERMS

epilepsy is triggered science
explains
like being poked by
excessive brooding

overstimulates brain
sleep well
your neurologist will say
avoid flickering lights—
all things that awaken the baggage cleanse
impressions when untended
are like raging lava
that fossilizes everything in its path

¹ A broad section of the Indian society still believes that epilepsy is a disease that inflicts people who have lost their mind, bordering on being mad, the denomination of mad that necessitates institutionalization. I've (I am an Indian) always shuddered to even think about the disease in my native language, Hindi. Epilepsy is *mirgee* in Hindi.

L 1: The mind shudders when tender fingers write the word mirgee.

L 2: The Hindi word for epilepsy is mir-gee. It can also be read as *female is dead*.

L 3: It is shocking when someone experiences an epileptic seizure.

L 4: As if the heart has stopped beating.

L 5: Some conversations always remain shrouded in secrecy.

L 6: An epileptic seizure is such a secret.

L 7: This seizure feels like I am ensnared by the devil.

L 8: "Have the epileptic smell leather shoes," I have heard people say.

I have heard this to be true that people would consider making the patient smell shoes as a remedy to stop an epileptic seizure. Added to the cultural embarrassment and estrangement that comes with the public knowledge of someone, your own having epilepsy is reason enough why one must endure this horrific disease, keep it locked and veiled. I do not know why, but it feels like I must never say epilepsy in Hindi, as if it has the power to return and pull me back in within itself like a ghost ensnaring a soul.