

An ode to chronic illness

There was a time when I went for a walk or run as long as I wanted for a quick release of endorphins.
Not anymore, I have to watch out not to exceed the step count and heartbeat to be able to function.

There was a time when I went to the mountains looking for peace and solitude.
Not anymore, the chaos of any kind of transportation and traffic shoots up adrenaline and makes me bedbound for days.

There was a time when I could stuff my brain with others' words to find solace and connection.
Not anymore, the words and emotions from others overload my fatigued brain and my sleep and memory become even more chaotic.

There was a time when I could binge-watch comic series to numb my emotions.
Not anymore, the fast-moving pictures and colors makes my eyes droop and burn.

There was a time when I could stuff my mouth with all sorts of chips to crush my anxiety.
Not anymore, food is more for sustaining life than to soothe my tension.

So what do you do, you ask
I sit with my emotions letting them take as much space as they need
Although Amma's voice still whispers in my mind - " Do not cry, do not laugh out loud"
From shouting to a whisper, that has been a huge progress in the past year.

Tears are hard to come by, but sometimes they pour out when I wake up in the morning.
Anger is more hard and barely recognizable from sorrow.
Exhaustion is not an emotion, I learned that when I was 34.

Love! Do I know what is love or how to love?
I have crossed oceans and moved mountains for people who won't even jump over a puddle for me.
And then, I have been loved unconditionally by a soul who was as lost and yet as loyal as me.

When I can no longer do anything else,
I am paying attention to my body and learning its reaction to emotions,
After a lifetime of suppressing them
A skill that is essential to life, but not accessible to my brain.

I know how to keep myself afloat in the currents of life, pure survival instincts than anything else.
But I don't know how to live or how to take care of myself.
This is the time I am learning to live, not just to survive, a right I had to earn by toiling throughout life.

I want to live, laugh, cry, and find out what I love and what I don't
And whom I love, who are my people and who aren't!
I let the days spread out without plans and agendas

Although there are always people who shout out to join the race
No more races for me, I walk at a pace that is comfortable for my body and mind
And I pick up my needles and hooks and add a stitch or two whenever I can
And I let the memories flood into the pages whenever they arise
That is enough for me to get along with this world!