

Drawing the Line

by Dilip Mohapatra (November 2016)



The mannequin behind the
check in counter
checks your ticket and identity
asks for your seat preference
without moving her lips
and soon regrets that she cannot accommodate
what you asked for
and her fingers fly in the keyboard
to issue your boarding pass showing
an isle seat on the eighteenth row
that she was forced to choose.

You amble on the sloping gangway
dragging your stroller
and are greeted by
the synthetic smiles and folded hands
of two humanoid hostesses
their gazes away from you
while engaged in their private tête-à-tête.

You labour through the isle

manoeuvring your way
through your co-passengers
coming from all directions
like random particles in a cloud chamber
and check your overhead locker
to find it already filled choc-a-block
and you somehow squeeze
your lap top bag under your seat.

And then starts your elbow war

with your neighbour
who has already planted his flag
on the common arm rest
and aggressively guards his post
but you decide not to easily give in and try
to grab few millimetres of territory somehow
which is constantly denied to you
and the gentleman that you are
you lock your arms on your chest
and rest it on the little bulge above the belt
that you have acquired over the years.

Then come the human robots

pushing their aluminum carts
offering you veggie and meaty delights
and beverages galore
and your mood brightens up
in anticipation
but the carts move at snail's pace
from the front and the rear
coming to the middle in slow motion
and suddenly you feel very middle class
sandwiched between
the privileged upper
and the pampered lower.

The cart advances

coming closer and closer
and as you salivate
and smarten up to place your order
suddenly you find it speeds up
to sweep past you towards the galley.
It seems that she runs out of stock
and needs a refill.
You wait knowing that
patience finally pays.
But then you see on the panel above you
the seat belt sign coming on
and wafts in the Captain's voice
on broadcast saying that
he has commenced descent and
would touch down
in few minutes from now.

Dilip Mohapatra (b.1950), a decorated Navy Veteran started writing poems since the seventies . His poems have appeared in many literary journals of repute worldwide. Some of his poems are included in the World Poetry Yearbook, 2013 and 2014 Editions. He has four poetry collections to his credit published by Authorspress India, and one non-fiction, a book of wisdom titled Points to Ponder. He holds two masters degrees, in Physics and in Management Studies. He lives with his wife in Pune. His website may be accessed at dilipmohapatra.com.

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