

Walking Alone

by Dilip Mohapatra (February 2015)

I try hard to decipher

the silverfish infested

brittle page from

my father's album

that perhaps held

the sepia toned picture

of the first ever

steps that I had taken

but cannot make out

if someone was

holding my hands

to steady me up.

But I distinctly remember

the faces of my friends

though not the names any more

on the narrow streets

of my ancestral city Cuttack

who walked with me to my school

on river Kathjori

and walked on its embankment
to take plunges in turn
into its water in spate
only to be caught
by our stern headmaster
standing on the banks
with his shining and well oiled cane.

I remember too
when I walked the aisles with you
under the crossed swords
and over the clouds
and amongst the cheering crowds.

I recall when I walked
under the shadow of your smiles
in harmony with your
gasps and groans
and those solitary strolls
in the park
under the fronds of the
midget date palms.

I remember when we
walked our children to
the kindergarten
and when we walked them
turn by turn
to the waiting cars
bedecked with flowers
and displaying the board
Just Married
and how we walked back
to our empty homes
to a vacuum that hounded us
for many a days.

I remember when the
walks became ambles
and continued to
become gallops
and faces that I passed by
became blurred a
nd indistinct without any identity
of their own

and I carried on.

The grass burnt under my toes

and with many a fallen trees

in my wake

I moved on relentlessly

climbing up

sliding down

again climbing

trying to reach the stars.

Now we got corns under

our tired and blistered feet

our arthritic joints squeak and cringe

our shoulders are frozen

we can't even support each other

but our spirits still soar

and so our faiths and hopes.

We got to cover

miles and miles of tracts

ahead of us

both walked and un-walked

for we were born to walk

to walk along our lonely roads

leading to our graves

unaided unguided

on our own.

Alone.

Dilip Mohapatra (b.1950), a decorated Navy Veteran started writing poems since the seventies. His poems have appeared in many literary journals of repute in India and abroad. Some of his poems are included in the World Poetry Yearbook, 2013 along with the works of 211 contemporary poets from 93 countries. He has two poetry books to his credit: *A Pinch of Sun & other poems*, and *Different Shades*, published by Authorspress. He holds two masters degrees, in Physics and in Management Studies. He lives with his wife in Pune.

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