



Can

Moving Past Cancer

*First Poetry Collection
from the 'Celebrating Cancer' Series*

Vibha Rani

CAN

(A Poetry Collection Under the Series 'Celebrating Cancer')



Vibha Rani

English Translation

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(The proceeds from the sale of this book will be used towards medical expenses of those undergoing treatment for Cancer and will be utilised for the Cancer Awareness Campaign)

Dedication

To those who found it preposterous

That my Cancer was cancerous

To those who held my hands

Through the lively days and,

Darkest nights and uneven fights.

And to those who fought and lost

You know the crossroads we've passed.

Celebration of life!

Cancer! Usually, a life alerting Catastrophe for patients and their loved ones! This is the perception most of us have of Cancer. And rightly so, because it is indeed a dangerous disease which in many cases proves to be terminal. No one wishes a tete-a-tete with the devil and no one images they would have to.

To most of the medical check-ups, doctors prescribed for me since my childhood came up with favourable results. I would often jokingly complain- ‘No problem yet again! What a waste of money!’ And then one fine day, sure and slow like the most sinister form of well- seasoned evil, my very own personal Cancer rose its head inside my body. It seemed to say to me that it was my turn, after my *mamaji*, my brother and my sister-in-law lost their lives to Cancer. The doctor laid out the protocol for my treatment. I, along with my family, buckled up for a long-term struggle with Chemotherapy, Surgery and Radiation treatments.

However, in due time, I started questioning my own approach to my treatment. I asked – ‘why struggle? why not fight? And if I have to fight, why do it as a victim? Why not as a warrior? Why not with laughter and creativity? Cancer or not, after all, this is the only life I have.’ In some ways it reminded me of long-gone passion- driven days of my youth, when I toyed with the idea of committing suicide. After a few failed attempts, I realised, how precious life was and that realisation changed my orbit of life from going on existing to that of living with greater presence.

Alongside good treatment, controlling food habits in support of well- wishes, it is important that we listen and to understand our inner voice. My subconscious reinforced the idea that I was not simply made for being hunted by an ailment. I had to live and help others live. I am grateful that I have a relationship with my creative side. So, I decided to apply myself to creative exploration like there was no tomorrow – reading, writing, making YouTube videos, conducting room theatre programs and on.

I had two options - I could cry myself to despair or I could laugh myself to a good fight. I chose the latter. I could keep laughter alive for myself and those around me. I thought Cancer is anyways such a morbid entity that while fighting it, I needed to change the vocabulary and attitude - from words and concepts like 'struggling' with it to concepts of 'celebrating' it. It was a great way out to being able to laugh at myself and to bring a dash of positive point of view to my life. That's how I wrote 'Celebrating Cancer' for '*Bindiya*' magazine. When it's editor Geetashree told me that it inspired several readers to attempt to understand Cancer, I found yet another way to celebrate it.

I was also writing poem during my treatment. The eleven months of my treatment between October 2013 and August 2014 showed me various forms of reincarnations of Cancer. I was scared at times. Sometimes, I would even cry aloud out of pain and misery. But I never allowed myself to have the thought that 'dying would be a better option than going through this pain' Allowing myself to go on that line of thought would be brutal murder of belief in the ability of human beings

to fight, in medical science's work of decades, of my own creativity and my loved ones' confidence and hope in me.

Today, I present the collection of my poems with the belief that we don't have to fear Cancer. We can fight it with our creativity and confidence. There is no greater truth than death. There is no greater purpose than to making death meaningful by doing something that continues to inspire even after one's death. Celebrating the toughest problems of life such as cancer is the only way to deal with them with dignity. I believe, you CAN and you WILL. So, let's celebrate Cancer!

During my treatment, Ajay, Toshi and Koshy were around all the time and stated without saying it - that in my happiness and laughter they found their own. Throughout this uphill climb, Dr. Mandar Nadkarni's belief in me was invaluable. He would say- 'Believe me, you will be soon on the stage acting in plays.'

To make it available to as many people as possible, I wanted to publish it in Hindi and English both. I want to thank Nighat Gandhi for readily agreeing to translate my poems into English. We talked about

these poems at length. Poem number 18 to 40 have been translated by Nighat in the sincerest and deeply involved manner. The remaining poems have been translated with a lot of sensitivity by Vatsala Srivastava and Swapnil Dixit. They have gone beyond translation and recreated my message from scratch in a new expression altogether. I can't forget the generous offer for final manuscript checking by the well-known poet and my friend Menka Shivdasani.

I had planned to publish them in 2014 itself. However, as soon as I emerged out of my Cancer treatment, my office work, my commitments in the theatre world and general chorus of life stole me away from my poems. When my friend and English poet from Bangalore Amrita Dongre invited me to 'Poetry Festival, Bangalore' in 2016, I realised, it is time the collection was offered to the public. I was grateful to the *Atta Galatta Bookstore* for agreeing to release this collection at this festival. AVITOKO Books had published it in a diglot form- Hindi and English. For on-line readers convenience, Hindi and English versions have been

separated. I am thankful to notnul.com for giving its platform for the noble cause.

This collection contains not only fifty- five poems, but a description of life and its turns, and I am hoping that you will bliss it. The funds generated through the sales of this collection will be used to help cancer patients through their treatment, so that they can also celebrate cancer and their lives once they win their fights against their worst demons.

Vibha Rani

Mumbai

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