

2019 DMPA Results

Junior Secondary

WINNER

Janiru Liyanage, 14

Baulkham Hills High School
Baulkham Hills, NSW

Can You Speak Sinhala?

There are nights when the brightest star
looks a ripped hole in the middle of that
sheet of black

behind the vast canvas of night,
is a roar of orgasmic light -
something angelic perhaps,

that maybe has a form,
maybe doesn't;

regardless, I'll look at the pinprick,
that fleck of
white,
and believe,
and *believe*,
that's all I can do right now

then, that star light travels millions
of miles to perish in the back of my eye -

I used to believe that my father was so powerful,
that his nightgown beckoned the night into being,
his umbrella uttered the rain from the sky

I've been so careless with everything I've said,
ushering all my words into the basement

Subha ratriyak
Good night

Taru
Stars

Can you see?

What do you see?

Taru

Where are you going?

I've been trying to map myself back to the past or squint myself
into the future, where I am finally radiant;
I've been trying to unstitch my DNA but I can't
find the seams - each step I've taken has been tracing
tongue after tongue

forgetting the taste of
Sīni

and learning
sugar

There,
here

Waiting for that ravenous tug of
light to claw and force its way

through the sky,
the night -

there,
here,

I can't remember how to say *love* in my first language,

or *God*
or *home*
or *miss*

I miss you
Taru

We are slowly going into the night
Subha ratriyak

Judge Comment:

This is a complex and sophisticated poem that belies the age of its talented author. Each line shimmers with power and translucent beauty. I find something new to admire on every reading,

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from the heartbreaking discovery that a 'powerful' father with the ability to control the elements is only human after all, to the creeping understanding that part of a much-loved culture is slowly disappearing. Truly wonderful writing.

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