

## SPEAK, THIS LITTLE TIME IS PLENTY...

Shubhalakshmi Shukla

Kiyomi Talaulicar's artistic oeuvre opens up her quest in the field of languages that convey inner calm (*stheerta* / stillness) amidst all the turbulence one lives with and observes around. In her recent suite 'Unlocking Stillness', her painterly lines marking fissures on walls and maps convey a strong syntax for borders, territorial boundaries, human memory and a search for a home within.

Geographical displacements and mass gentrification brings about an inner battle within languages owned by the people. Often, before taking a new birth, the languages of the displaced go into a deep silence. Kiyomi's art works bring about a focus on the life at the edge that searches for a new language. Like a foetal growth unaware of one's own subtle-body-consciousness; its movement inside the womb, a new language starts making a home within, venerating life.

'Unlocking Stillness', a series on *Walls as Beings*, beholds this deep silence marking a process of breaking and making within. Human surrender to a wall, be it an architectural unit or artistic endeavor; manifests a vortex a human energy it beholds. It is deep yet simple, of bodily surrender yet filled with sensuousness; and of the mundane yet ethereal presence.

For knowing how this intensity of dialectical feelings gets conveyed, one has to know Kiyomi's work process in her studio, which is introspective and layered with a keen eye for language as desire that fulfils the human mind. With a candle lit as she works, suggestive of creating a space for peace and nurturing optimism that prevails in her thought process, her studio is often drenched in profound silence, where her extremely organized Zen like artistic paraphernalia as displayed in *Shrine* (2013), beckons touch. Through inking, printing, taking impressions, photographing, recollecting, reshaping, scraping and smudging, she is often engaged in the process of listening to one's quivering memory as a conundrum for collective myth and sustenance.

In her artistic oeuvre, it is through the element of earth that urns and leaves, such as in *Urn*" (2013) and *Our Familiar Eternity* (2012) surface as solitary beings, or through the element of fire, that *Songs of the Past* (2000) get lit up. The elements of air and space surface through the dark-empty-chasmal volumes of inhaled and exhaled breath. The *pancha maha bhutas* creating a balance in the *prana-vayu* (breath) predominates as a unified collective existence. Over viewing her large spectrum of works from home bound objects to architectural units, walls, stairs, clocks, diaries, and her passion for wood, paper, music, literature and philosophy, Kiyomi meticulously creates a home for herself in the serene and the mystical.

In 'Unlocking Stillness', Kiyomi has chosen to be in rumination with walls as beings, and a wall in the posture of a seeker (*sadhaka*), is about the inner quietness in her. Enhancing the seeking subject, humble yet resplendent from within, address a call for hearing the brittle and the turbulent.

The interiority in walls manifesting layered acceptance, as a part of resistance to violence and an inward search for humaneness, allows her artworks to offer her acknowledgement as a devotee

would respond to a stranger, as in *Membrane*. This makes Kiyomi's individuality of spiritual acceptance of inevitable beauty, in the way the immediate moment is, in spite of the drastic duality the moment beholds.



*MEMBRANE, Acrylic, Ink & Pencil on Arches Paper, 28.75 x 20.75 inches, 2016, Kiyomi Talaulicar*

### **Analogy of the Wall as Beings:**

Elaborating upon experiencing love and freedom, as woven into one another in Kiyomi's paintings, and referring to the prison poems written by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, I would like to view the analogies and the dialectics in the manifested content of her works.



A prison can be a systemic encaging of the self to remain choice less, considering aspects of human comfort. However, Kiyomi's art works transcend the anguish by bringing the edges together, which often human beings recognize within.

Perfect stillness speaks of an ontological question of being. Recognizing the moment when the hills, mountains, trees, the breeze and the light are in complete stillness, as if time has stopped, such as in *Fate*, one may hear a distant sound of rivulets of water inscribing history on its own.



*FATE*, Acrylic, Ink & Pencil on Arches Paper, 28.5 x 20.5 inches, 2016, Kiyomi Talaulicar

*“Speak, for your lips are free;  
Speak; your tongue is still yours,  
Your upright body is yours-  
Speak your life is still yours.  
See, how in the blacksmith’s shop  
The flames are hot, the iron is red  
Mouth of locks have begun to open,  
Each chain’s skirt has spread wide.  
Speak, this little time is plenty  
Before the death of body and tongue:  
Speak, for truth is still alive-  
Speak; say whatever is to be said.”*

*-Faiz Ahmed Faiz*

In the above lines, Faiz Ahmed Faiz has translated the human desire to convey the deepest possible love of freedom fighters for the nation. The honour of a single thought of freedom as a collective desire demanding oneness and integrity, gets conveyed as held tightly within their breasts. Consequently, walls holding memory and history as a lode to human consciousness, allow the beauty of the resonating silence. All the expressions of quietness in love are embodied in varying hues of intensities, discriminating the power of the unsaid-said.

*Membrane & Fate*, reflect Kiyomi’s manifestation of inwardly bliss which could not resist blooming. The inevitable strength of the dialectic in the analogy of a wall encompassing fissure is an engagement with a slowly forming language within, creates a moment of completion. All that seems to be mundane and frugal gets embodied with a volume of minute-sound or *sukshma* in her works. The unspoken content gets filled with inner radiance and tranquility, wherein she carves out details of interiority as a profound stage.

*“In the prison yard trees, with no native land,  
Head drooping, are absorbed in making  
On the skirts of heaven images and pictures;  
On the crest of the roof is glittering  
The beautiful hand of the gracious moonlight..”*

*-Faiz Ahmed Faiz (section from the poem ‘A Prison Evening’, 5)*

Ephemeral light as content in *Prelude* and the human hands in *Longing* question linear history and memory. The feel of the paper in *Prelude* and its details brings to the mind a similitude to the paintings of Vermeer in *The Allegory of Painting*. Impressions of the hands in *Longing* recall a primitive and pre-historic human desire for marking one’s presence in the lived space. A volume of dense and deep darkness alternating with light in simultaneity forms the haunting element of human consciousness in *Embrace*.

## Dialectics in content:

*“The sheen of the stars has dissolved into the dust,  
The blue sky has dissolved into light,  
In green corners dark-blue shadows  
Waver, as if into the heart  
A ripple of pain.”*

*-Faiz Ahmed Faiz (section from the poem ‘A Prison Evening’ 10)*

The essence of the above poem also manifests in her painting, *Moon Stone*. In *Luminance* and *A Tribute in Stone and Shadow*, a lingering tranquility of palatial architectural walls slowly getting rain washed and absorbing the sun, is felt. The beauty of getting weathered in climatic alteration are of the moments that make Kiyomi’s works incarnate spirituality in gradual erosion-of the body in nature.

*“On a visit to Ladakh, Kiyomi had found peace in monasteries, spent hours meditating. Reflecting on her spiritual journey, she had persuaded that Buddhism has a role to play in our modern times: it has the power to heal the wounds inflicted upon society, its people. Taking a cue from her faith, Kiyomi’s art explores the nature of life, its resilience that enables it to rise from the rubble, Phoenix like. The Zen-like minimalism in her explorations extends sometimes to the paper she uses, staining it with tea/coffee to get a sepia stained look. Her art captures timelessness, a lived-in solidity that is tactile, not squeaky clean stainless steel, the objects she has painted, have survived and with each, there is a personal history, an ownership and belonging”.*

*-Ina Puri ( Excerpt from catalogue text, ‘The Past Was Yesterday’ 2014).*

Kiyomi’s visual language provokes several details. The fleshing out of the bodies of walls in stone, concrete, brick and wood bound together in her own observation of representing a moment of tranquil time, dissolves all hierarchies manifesting Time. In this collective of listening deep to the slow forming of the silences, Kiyomi has expressed her deep love for unified oneness of overall existence, as one.

## ABOUT SHUBHALAKSHMI SHUKLA

Shubhalakshmi Shukla is an art historian and independent curator based in Mumbai. She has been a lecturer and visiting faculty at various institutions. Her published works include *Imagined Locales* (New Delhi: BR Publishing, 2015).