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## Voices of Silence

I'm nine years old  
And I'll never die

One winter night  
while I slept  
and dreamt of  
enchanted morns  
piping hot jelebis  
warm blankets  
bright green kites,  
and blood red kurtas  
a monstrous shroud  
of sticky white fog  
smothered me in a  
terrifying embrace  
endless, eternal.

In another time  
and another place  
I was nine years old  
and did not die.

One August day  
forty years ago  
a mushroom cloud  
rose from the earth  
killed thousands  
maimed millions  
wiped out generations  
embalmed me  
for ever.

I'm nine years old  
And I'll never die  
I'll haunt the ghouls  
who thrive  
on the blood of  
men, women and children  
I'll echo the  
sobs, screams and gasps  
of toilers in pain  
the eerie  
silence  
of premature death  
And I'll never die.

I'll sit on your  
shoulder for generations  
I'll goad you, worry you  
anger you,  
and never let you go  
until you create a world  
where Bhopals  
and Hiroshimas  
are mere nightmares  
of a distant past  
never to recur.

Until then.

I'm nine years old  
And I'll never die.