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Diya

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Diya

Rita Shankar

Midnight, yet her visage glowed like the
diya*,
No more taste to taste, lack of feed to feed,
Rupees gained,
Royalty, caution! Handle with care!

Gazing out of the palace's arched window
without a reason, yet satisfaction,
Petal-like fingers flowing through her long,
thick, black braid,
Glittering jewel on her nose smiling to the
diya dancing on the windowpane.

Envious moon trapping her almond-shaped
eyes in its gaze,
No attempt to trap the moon's image,
Full moon, admiration for the flickering
diya,
Unable to trap her in a pan of water.

Mirror jewelry on a maharaja's elephant
catches her beam of radiance,
Seeking the simplistic, yet perfectly rounded
red bindi between her eyebrows,
Hands adorned with mehndi** wave
farewell to Mother and Father,
Rupees lost,
Sitting behind the net drapes in the
palanquin,

Journeying to dispel darkness in another
palace,
Destined to be his maharani-friends no
more.

Daughter to a daughterless mother,
Wife to him,
Companion to her,
Mother to them,
Shedding diya on lonesomeness.

Not leaving her parents like water spilled
from a pot,
But sharing her diya from one wick to the
next,
Ever glimmering, equipoise.

*diya- the light of a small lamp's lit wick

**mehndi- traditional maroon-colored
designs that decorate a Hindu bride's hands