



Being, Belonging, Becoming

Cold conversations

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Context: These poems have been created using the words of past and present learners from the health professions in India who have ever experienced othering during their training, and who have volunteered to talk about it. **Click here** to read the editorial about the project. Alternatively, you may right click over the hyperlinked text, copy the link, and paste it in a browser of your choice.

Virtue signal

Muslim lady doctor?

Oh –

And it begins.

No labels, you say

No caste, you say

No class, you say

No single name

You virtue signal so well,

but I do not fit your box,

your definitions, eh?

That does not mean

I am incapable.

I am bold,

strong,

able.

Well, people judge

but it doesn't matter.

I am many things.

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Coffee break

I am not an addict, I am not a loser, I am not different—
but someone at the cafe is staring at me like I might be.
I just want a coffee and a moment
to think about nothing,
or maybe microbiology.

Back at the hospital someone is deciding whether I belong,
but I am many things and they wouldn't know where to put me—
doctor, woman, Muslim, someone whose name the barista got wrong again.

But I don't even correct them.
I exist without permission.

To the person opposite me

The thing is, I am just the way I am
you have your judgments, I have my tea
and we could both sit here pretending
the other doesn't exist
but I can feel your curiosity
like a cold draft from the door.
You are waiting for me to explain
but I won't
I like how I don't have to say anything
and still, I am here.

Acknowledgment: without the authentic contributions made by the respondents, it would not have been possible to create poems on othering that illustrate such a wide spectrum of issues.