

WHEN THE SEA RETURNS

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The scarf she wears looks like a
fishermen's net,
The Kazakh she speaks sounds like
salt in her breath,
"Buildings are dead"
I haven't seen the sea though
in my twenties,
She hasn't seen me, she is in her
seventies,
I imagine a phantasmatic rendezvous
by the dead floor of the Aral sea,
We meet amid catastrophe, our quiet
feet shift over the sand's mural, the art
of dying water,
Her language, discreet. Mine? A
reminder of her Cold War nemesis,
I forsake the phonetics, her language
now a song of agony,
The syllables are shrouded in the
moaning of the desolate earth,
I decipher her soul, she and her land
are one,
"Buildings die when builders leave"
Abandonment is death.
Corrugated piers, sunken ships,
shipwrecked trawlers.
Were we to collect the pining women
of the dead and the lost,
And Mark the matter of their beloveds,
Each upended boat would become a
shrine,

would then their tears suffice,
break the ice, give the life?

"Buildings die when builders die"
A half-fallen house on the shores of
swelling shores of Kerala,
A dozen such exhibits of devastation
dangling on the cardboard,
I mourn the buildings, tragedy
enamours; blue doors now brown,
another water burial will soon knock
the door down,
Fie! Ocean knows no courtesy,
Another telepathic togetherness,
I show her around,
Abundance buries, deprivation kills,
a flawed oxymoron;
I read the wrinkles in her eyes, she
read mine,
Jingles of wealth are trumpets of
death, We blink.
She blinks hope, I blink resolve,
When the sea returns,
When the sea returns,
We chorus the homonym,
When someday Aral ends its
extinction,
I will march to God's own country
and coax the Ocean to stop its
incursions,
"buildings die when builders die"

This poem captures the poignant effects of Climate Change through an imaginary conversation between two women, from Kazakhstan and Kerala (India) respectively. The Aral Sea in Kazakhstan, once a majestic sea with bountiful scope for livelihood has now dried up, partially because of anthropomorphic reasons but greatly because of climate change, as juxtaposed to that, the imagery of receding coastline in Kerala because of rising sea level washing away houses or rendering them inhabitable has become a new reality. The poet was taken aback by hitherto unseen visuals from Kerala as showed in an exhibition held in JMI, New Delhi. Though miles away, they are tied together by a shared woe, namely the loss of one's home and livelihood. It only vindicates how universal and inevitable Climate Change is. This fact begs sensibility from our end as much as the action on the policymakers' end.