

## The Arts and Psychiatry

### ALZHEIMER'S DAY REFLECTIONS

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Raghuram TM is a known Indo-Anglian poet with five anthologies to his credit. This is one of his newer poems.

Behind the screen of  
your hazy eyes, it seems,  
there is another movie playing;  
Another parallel story of  
your making; your idioms;  
and your private language;  
We just stand agape  
at your undecipherable mumblings;  
“What do you like for dinner?” —  
Our bland question  
and you burst into laughter –  
“The dog can’t walk on two wheels.”  
“Did you mean the walker?”  
“No, the watermelon walks on wheels.”

Flabbergasted at your strange retorts  
we encourage you to sit up,  
sip your regular fruit juice;  
Hard of hearing, partially blind,  
It’s only the touch of your wrinkled hands  
That links us to your heart and a hoary past—  
A six-decade-old dialogue of body language;  
I stand before you and you fondly stroke my  
shoulder;  
“Remember me, Dad?”  
Your cloudy eyes scan me, then brighten,  
“You’re a nice guy, seen you somewhere!”  
And the first teardrop of the day  
rolls down my cheek...

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NOTE: Caregiver burden is an oft-discussed issue in the context of mental disorders, more so in the case of mental retardation and dementia. In caring for a parent, sibling, spouse, or close relative with a dementing illness, there are moments of helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, and heartbreak. The faint glimmer of hope and deliverance is somewhat like the light at the end of the tunnel. This poem tries to capture one such moment...

— The Poet