

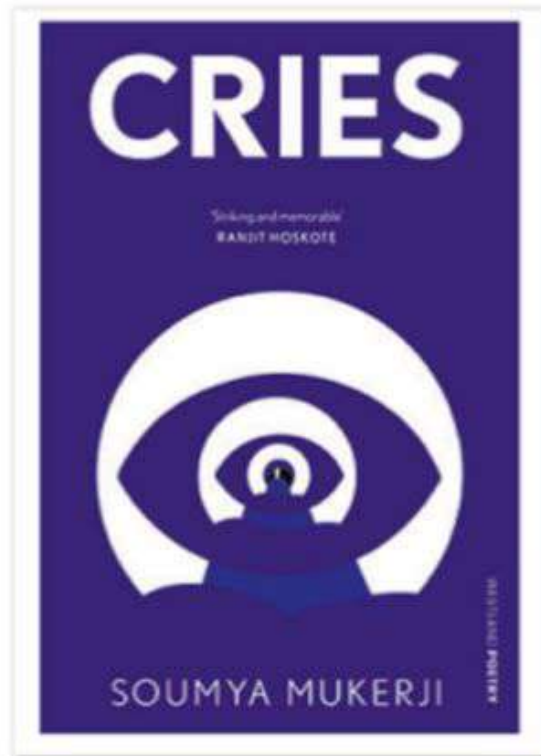
Poetry of the times

THESE are strange times. We have gone from one movement that united lakhs of youths from all walks of life to fight for an education system that is just to all, to another campaign that now threatens to tear that unity apart with a call to end reservation. If you're feeling confused, distraught, or wired, you're not alone. But this diarist humbly suggests that the answer lies not in doomscrolling, but in turning your fingers instead to the pages of a new poetry collection we have found quiet solace in.

Journalist-poet Soumya Mukerji, who was once features editor at **mid-day**, has just released her first book, *Cries* (Westland, ₹350), which she describes as "a slim collection of urgent poems that attempt to articulate our cries in these strange and desperate times...

both for the unparalleled beauty and the unbearable burdens of this life. It is an ode to our collective cries — unexpressed, silenced, unheard, unvoiced".

"The poems thread through climate and COVID, spin within cyclone and war, spread themselves across the 600-million-year-old islands



of Langkawi [Malaysia], conflicted Kashmir, and melting mountains. They plunge deep into depressive states of mind and at other times delight in the lightness of spring rain and self-love. The eco-poetics channel the continuum of seasons, species, sentiments," she says.

Journalism and poetry, Mukerji offers, are not all that different.

"Honestly, poetry was always a part of my life and my attempt has been to look at things with

an intuitive lens, a poetic gaze, even in

my journalistic narratives. So I tried to excavate the underlying poetry through stories," she says, "I believe that poetry is also, from another lens, non-fiction when it is rooted in the truth. The hope is to bring the truths and tumults of our times and the human experience of journalism to poetry itself."



Soumya Mukerji