With eight attacks in the last nine years, including one that involved more than 10 coordinated shooting and bombing incidents in 2008, Mumbai is no stranger to terrorism. The 2008 attacks targeted crowded public places such as the main railway station Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the popular downtown Leopold Café, and two of India's top five-star hotels, the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower, and the Trident. The horror began on Wednesday, 26 November and lasted until Saturday, 29 November 2008, killing 164 people and wounding at least 308. Ajmal Kasab, the only terrorist caught alive in this operation, is still languishing in an Indian jail.

When we talk of peace, however, we do not speak only of these mega brutalities. In everyday situations, violence has become a way of life. With people trying to find a foothold in jam-packed trains, negotiating their way through chaotic streets, and ducking from stones hurled at trains hurtling through slums, the Mumbaiker is a survivor.

This city on the whole is an energetic place, working round the clock for daily survival. But it is also a city on the edge, and the rage can spill over any time.
Poets promote peace in a historic global event

Poets around the world will participate in the momentous 100 Thousand Poets for Change movement on September 24, 2011; in Mumbai, a multilingual poetry reading and a workshop for Adivasi children are being planned.

Poets in 400 cities representing 95 countries are currently organizing the largest poetry reading in history with over 500 individual events scheduled to take place simultaneously on September 24th to promote environmental, social, and political change. The historic global event, 100 Thousand Poets for Change, has been set in motion by Michael Rothenberg, a widely known poet, songwriter, editor of the online literary magazine Bigbridge.org and an environmental activist based in Northern California.

In Mumbai, poets Menka Shivdasani and Anju Makhija will be organizing two events. The first of these, on September 23, 2011, will be a workshop for Adivasi children at the Bandanwadi school near Tara village close to Panvel, Raigad district, Maharashtra, where Adivasi poems/songs in Marathi will be explained and sung. This will be led by Anil Vishwanatharama.

The second event will be a multilingual poetry reading on September 24, (4.30 p.m. onwards) hosted by the Culture Beat, Mumbai Press Club, which will include peace music, and participation by poets writing in English, Marathi, Gujarati, Malayalam, Sindhi and other Indian languages. There will also be a film screening, organized by Rafique...
Baghdadi, and an Open Mike session, where Mumbaikars may present their poems related to the themes of peace and sustainability.

Anju Makhija, who has been working with Adivasi children in the Panvel area for many years, says: "These tribes, also called kathkaris, are losing their culture. They usually live in the hilly areas close to nature. Traditionally, they earn a living by cutting trees from nearby jungles and selling the wood to timber merchants. In recent times, they have been working as farm labourers and construction workers. Many of them live below the poverty line and have problems with alcoholism. They are not easily accepted by the mainstream culture and are isolated in many ways. Their children have now started going to local schools, but these Adivasis are fast losing their songs."

While the workshop takes place between 11 a.m and 1 p.m. on September 23, follow-up efforts will involve encouraging the children to collect more poems from their elders.
"Poets, writers, artists, and humanitarians will create, perform, educate and demonstrate, in their individual communities, and decide their own specific area of focus for change within the overall framework of peace and sustainability, which is a major concern worldwide and the guiding principle for this global event," says Rothenberg.

The events range from a poetry and peace gathering in strife-torn Kabul and Jalalabad to 20 collective poetic actions in Mexico City where poets, painters, filmmakers and musicians will spread the word of peace and non-violence throughout the city with day-long readings and workshops. There are 29 events planned in India, seven in Nigeria, 17 in Canada, 19 in Great Britain, five in China, three in Cuba and over 220 events in the United States.

The home page of the 100 Thousand Poets for Change website, www.100TPC.org, has been buzzing these last few weeks, and each city organizer and their community has an individual Event Location blog page on the website for posting written material, poetry, artwork, photos, and video to document this global mega-event across national borders.

Immediately following September 24th all documentation on the 100TPC.org website will be preserved by Stanford University in California, which has recognized 100 Thousand Poets for Change as an historical event, the largest poetry reading in history. They will archive the complete contents of the website, 100TPC.org, as part of their digital archiving program LOCKSS.

Mumbaikars are invited to send in their poems, artworks or any other relevant material on the themes of peace and sustainability. Write in to Menka Shivdasani and Anju Makhija at poetsinmumbai@gmail.com

For more information, contact:

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In Bandanwadi, close to the peaceful environs of the Karnala Bird Sanctuary in the Raigad district of Maharashtra in India, there is a little village school. Many of the students are tribal children, whose parents are Adivasis living in the hilly areas close to nature. For decades they have been earning a living cutting trees from nearby jungles, selling the wood to timber merchants, and keeping their culture alive through indigenous songs.

These tribals, also called 'kathkaris', have lately been finding work as farm labourers and construction workers, living below the poverty line and trying to cope with a variety of problems, including alcoholism. Isolated in many ways, these tribals are not easily accepted by the mainstream culture; now, however, their children have started going to local schools.

As they struggle to survive through these new challenges of a changing social and economic structure, these Adivasis are fast losing their songs, dances and traditional practices. Learning English has become a matter of pride, but in the process, a rich legacy of an oral culture is being lost.

The 100 Thousand Poets for Change movement proved to be a catalyst for a grass-roots initiative in this tribal region of Maharashtra. For some years now, Anju Makhija had been quietly working with the local authorities to help preserve this culture, collecting songs that these
tribals sang after a hard days' work.

On September 23, 2011, this effort came to life in the form of a workshop for students of the Bandanwadi school. The Principal, Shriram Kamal Patil, and the teacher, Lalita Santosh Ombale, introduced the children to their own tribal songs and encouraged them to keep in touch with their roots.

The experience was truly heart-warming. As the children loudly and enthusiastically gave voice to the songs of their elders, they also jumped up and began to dance. A little girl called Pinky gave a solo performance, completely unselfconscious as she recreated the movements she had seen her parents perform.

Santosh Thakur, who works with the nearby Yusuf Meherally Centre, was an active participant, energetically joining in the performances, as several of the local residents watched in delight. Anil Vishwakarma, who plays an active role in ensuring education for these tribal children, was also among those who were present.

The children were also thrilled when they received gifts of books and stationery, from 'Vishindevi Children's Media Centre'.

There were some fascinating insights into Adivasi behaviour - for instance, while traditionally in Indian society, the man comes home and demands that his dinner be served, among these tribals, things are very different; both husband and wife come home together after working in the fields and then share a drink. There is something to be learned here about equality!

The workshop may have ended, but the initiative continues. The teachers have promised that they will continue to encourage the children to learn more such songs from their parents. Hopefully this will ensure that the parents too keep their traditions alive!
MULTI-LINGUAL
POETRY READING IN MUMBAI
SEPTEMBER 24, 2011

Since Mumbai speaks in many languages, we thought it would be appropriate to organise a multi-lingual poetry reading on the theme of peace to mark the city’s participation in the 100 Thousand Poets for Change movement. The event was held at the Press Club, where for some years Anju Makhija and Menka Shivdasani have been organising cultural activities under the Culture Beat banner. Participants included senior Gujarati poets Dileep Jhaveri and Kamal Vora; Marathi poets Hemant Divate and Meenakshi Patil; English poets Anand Thakore and Annie Zaidi, among others. On the occasion, Nutan Jani released her Gujarati translation of an anthology of Sindhi Partition Poetry, Freedom and Fissures, compiled by Anju and Menka and published by Sahitya Akademi. Award-winning Gujarati poet Sanskritirani Desai also lent her support and shared her work in Hindi. Madhusudan Kumar’s peace music lent a special touch to the evening.
Madhusudan Kumar pursued Sitar music under Prof. D. S. Damle [Disciple of Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar] and AIR artiste Pt. Giriraj for a few years. He became a disciple of 'Aftaab-e-Sitar' Ustad Vilayat Khan Saheb [1969] and shifted to Shimla in Himachal Pradesh and later Dehradun in Uttar Pradesh and much later to Kolkata. He learnt the rudiments of Sitar music under the traditional yet redefined "Guru-Shishya Parampara method". He painted Ustadji's ancestral portraits, along with great musicians of yesteryears.

As a member of the "Global Organic Theatre", he has performed Sitar at the 'National Gallery of Modern Art' during the 'Kala Ghoda Art Festival 2009 and 10', 'Jehangir Art Gallery 'and 'Artists' Centre', among others. He has researched the evolution of the Sitar from the times of its invention by Hazrat Amir Khusro in the 12th Century - evolution of Sitar and Surbahar in 'Imdad Khani Gharana' of Ustad Vilayat Khan.

Dileep Jhaveri writes in Gujarati and English. He has published a book of poems 'Pandu Poems And Others', and a play in Gujarati called 'Vyasochchhwas' translated in English by Kamal Sanyal and published by Seagull Books titled 'A Breath of Vyas.' Several poems are translated in English, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Malayalam. He is also on the editorial board of www.museindia.com and has presented his poems in Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia and USA, among other places. He has been honoured with the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad award (1989), Critic Award (1989) and Jayant Pathak Award.

Apart from being a poet and playwright Dileep Jhaveri is also a medical practitioner in Mumbai.
ANAND THAKORE

Born in Mumbai, in 1971, Anand Thakore was raised there and in the UK. A Hindustani classical vocalist by profession, he trained for many years with Pandit Satyasheel Deshpande and Pandit Baban Haldankar of the Agra gharana. He holds a BA degree in English Literature from Elphinstone College, where he also studied Sanskrit Literature. He subsequently earned an MA in English Literature at the University of Poona. His first book of verse, Waking in December, appeared in 2001. He is the recipient of a national scholarship from The Ministry of Human Resource Development, and a grant from the Charles Wallace India Trust for experimental work in the UK. Thakore is the founder of Harbour Line, a Mumbai-based publishing collective, and of Kshitij, a group devoted to the creation of interactive performance spaces for practicing musicians. He is currently on the editorial board for the Montreal Prize Global Anthology and lives in Mumbai.

MEENAKSHI PATIL

Meenakshi Rajendra Patil, an award-winning poet and artist, has won numerous gold medals, including one for standing first at Mumbai University in Marathi Literature and Aesthetics. She is also the recipient of several scholarships, including Lotus Foundation Scholarship, TATA Foundation Scholarship and P.K Atre Award. Her works include a thesis on 'Devotional Music', a Thesis on 'Needs of spiritual thinking' included in the 'Adhyatma - Ek Shodh' published by Sumangal Prakashan (Kalnirnaya) -1998, Proverbs and Sayings in Khandeshi Dialect - a Social Study', a collection of poetry 'Is It In Your DNA' (Abhidhanantar Publications) and a weekly column. She has also held solo art exhibitions and scripted and directed a documentary film 'Sobat', in addition to acting in another documentary, 'Ummid'. Her documentary film on 'Social Impact of Climate Change' was shortlisted among 15 out of 100 films in a World Bank Competition. Her administrative experience includes being Secretary at Marathi Literature and Cultural Board, Dept of Cultural affairs, Maharashtra State. She is currently Deputy Director (PWD), Mantralaya.
Cities Ran Amuck
Motilal Jotwani

When India gained its independence from British rule, the country paid a heavy price. Even as Indians were rejoicing in their freedom, they suffered the brutal effects of Partition. The communal carnage that took place caused the migration of more than ten million people. With the whole of Sind going to Pakistan, the Sindhi community was the worst affected, and many Sindhi Hindus were forced to flee, arriving in India as penniless refugees.

In 1998, Anju Makhija and Menka Shivdasani collaborated with a senior Sindhi poet, Arjan ‘Shad’ Mirchandani, to translate poetry by Sindhi writers who had lived through Partition, including Shaikh Ayaz, Hari Dilgir, Nand Jhaveri and Vasudev Nirmal. The book was published under the title Freedom and Fissures, by Sahitya Akademi in 1998. Marathi poet Niranjan Uzgare translated this anthology into Marathi, and now, there is also a Gujarati translation by Nutan Jani. Jani’s Gujarati translation was launched by Dileep Jhaveri at the multilingual poetry reading on September 24, 2011. Some poems were also presented, in Gujarati and English versions.

DILEEP JHAVERI RELEASES NUTAN JANI’S GUJARATI TRANSLATION OF SINDHI PARTITION POETRY

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Streets roared, “Allah-O-Akbar, Har Har Mahadev!”

In Karachi, on January 6, 1948, huddled in a store-room, we waited with bated breath. The world, it seemed, would come to a sudden end.

“Hand over the kafirs in your house,” the rioters demanded.
God’s good man, God himself, Allahdino lied to them: “The people you are looking for sailed to Bombay yesterday”.

Allahdino was an ordinary man, Sindhi and Sanskrit dino in his Muslim name.
Allahdino lied once again: “The poor creatures migrated to India, leaving behind their precious belongings. Do you want those instead?”

And we waited with bated breath...

Fire ... Oh Fire!
Hari Dilgir

Flames outside, flames inside... fire, oh fire!
My house, my being... set on fire!

Can water catch fire?
Why do my eyes rain fire?

Built from bones and blood, this house,
doors, windows, walls all on fire!

Deepak raag is the music of fire.
The sky ablaze... earth, ocean, all on fire.

Do my eyes deceive me, or has the world changed?
In fireflies, stars, the moon, I see fire, fire!

My body burns in the drizzle.
Now who set the clouds on fire?

It may die down now,
But I will fester forever in the fire!
WAR FOR AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1. When I was born the War was on with its outcome uncertain and the fate of the nations decided there will be scarcity all over the meadows will not have grass for sheep the trees will not have leaves for shade the oceans will not have fish for catch the fields will be fallow and the clouds will be callous starving children will be blind and the blind will go deaf the blood will thirst for poison and the lungs will be full of ash coughing amputees will crowd for alms and people will spit in their palms temples will deny orphans of dead soldiers whose pregnant wives will whore at the entrance all histories become one when in ruins where saints are honoured with bullets

I knew this when I turned four when covering our bleeding heart with barbed wire we lost the father of our new born nation

2. For more than two years after my birth I had a pot belly and could not walk but could talk the curse to be a paralysed poet was on

Still like a wish granted to the condemned I knew the taste of dark chocolate and fragrance of imported soaps and dresses sprinkled with rosewater before being sentenced to visit the common loo and wade through overflowing cesspools to the kindergarten school

The first thing I remember of the school was my love for the teacher in dark glasses and long plaits with chocolate smelling oil

The dark passages of the tenement were full of tigers and snakes

My panting fear was proof of their hissing presence

They disappeared as mother opened the door and I became a prince again under the yellow light of electric bulb

Ghosts and witches came later when my reluctant and devout grandmother visited us scratching her shaved head she told stories of child Krishna’s marvels

I knew of mightier fears than snakes and tigers

Every animal was a potential devil and every household item turned into a monster that only Krishna could destroy

What he did later on growing up I came to know soon after fifty years while reading Mahabharat

3. At the age of five my long locks were sheared for an offering to Mother Goddess in a hot and humid room full of smoke of sacred fire my gaudily dressed maternal aunts sang and danced while I cried and the cruel hexes laughed each showing me a mirror that echoed my sobs

Even before I learned to write it was decided

No lyrics No songs No worship.
4.
The hell for unfaithful was everyday life
Shivering before dawn in a long queue for a bottle of milk
with bleary eyes
the blue stripes on the foil of cold glass
looked like the rainbow of the covenant

Hours of toil at school and chores at home
were pledged to repay the sins of ancestors
who wasted life in wars
In rent clothes and smeared with damp dust of flaking plaster
chanting arithmetic tables and conventional prayers
the pilgrimage of the repentant continued
to nations drawn clumsily on textbook maps
paying tribute to the victors burnishing golden eras
with the ashes of the vanquished

5.
Visiting temples surrounded with florists, fruit sellers,
fortune-tellers and beggars
one day I saw a vendor selling hell
On a large poster in small 4"x4" squares
were painted naked men and women
in garish red and brilliant yellow
being punished for their sins in a hundred ways
in titillating postures
At an age when hair
under armpits and loin
had not erupted
the temptation to see the underworld
compelled frequent sojourns to God

6.
Not one year passed without war
in the house, neighbourhood, town, nation or the world
The reasons were copious

Flourescent language of someone was a shadow cast on neighbour's wall
Caste was sweat turning stink for some flaring nose
Vermilion of religion rushed to run with blood
Cry of freedom peeled bark off the tree
Hunger was desert sand in envy of dew
Atom was for explosion

War is an immortal monster
that cannot be drowned or blown away or burnt down
Every drop of blood breeds tiny monsters that grow again
like a forest re-emerging after floods and fires
No volcano is ever dead
There is no death for the paralysed poet
who repeats the same verse
in varying words and rhythms and rhymes.
BLACK AND WHITE

1
The moment
black is turning out into white
right then
white has been converting into black
But in a hurry
one misses the moment
just when they cross each other
just when they contain each other
Catching hold of the moment
if one takes a secret path
one would reach over there
where black is not
and white can not be

2
You brought stones
from the mountain
I brought shells
from the sea-shore
The stones coarse and uneven
sharp and dented
The shells shining and glossy
meticulously carved
The stones tepid while the shells
damp
We didn’t want to win
the sea-shells
Neither to lose
the stones
The sea can not reach
the top of the mountain
the mountain can never fathom
the depth of the sea
Our game was
to keep black and white alongside
and to make silence
hear the sound
to make the depth
look at the height.

3
Only black...
Has absolute black ever been seen?
Black and nothing but black?
White must have crept in
from above or from below
from the middle or from the sides
or from somewhere
they must have been seen
simultaneously
utterance of the word white
must have been heard as black along
with
Sheer black...
Immaculate white...
Could they ever be
absolutely apart from each other?

4
Black and white
wearing the masks of the chessman
confronting each other
in a game of chess
They bear enmity and strategies
ploys and resistances
tensions and trickery
against each other
White desperate to overcome black
black deadly determined
to defeat white
Either a defeat or a victory
is inevitable
Neither victory nor a defeat
is possible as well
Only if the black takes off its mask
and white its own
But this is Chess
the game played
with and by the chessmen
only.

5
Black is nothing but
less of white
and white less of black
White is
till there is black
If white is
then black shall be
If black converges
white would get intense
If white coagulates
black would lessen too
As such
Black and White
are grammatical forms
and exist in simultaneity.

6
You rushed with the flag painted
black
to be factional on the side of black
and automatically turned adverse to
whatever was white
You could not comprehend that
the mistake would turn out fatal
And you ignited fire in the eyes of white
set fire to the blood of black
and lowered the wells of poison into
the bones of black
You filled both their arrow-cases with
frantic rage-oppression-anger-enmity-fear-danger
and then kept watching
the entire fiasco as helpless
bystander
oh... ...only if you
had gone in midst of
black and white
and handed over to white
the flag marked black
and to black the flag marked white
you could have succeeded in preven-
ting
this fatal blood shedding battle.

(Translated from the original Gujarati
by Karamshi Pir)
"DANDI MARCH - THE SALT MARCH"

At the time of Dandi March
To take the salt
Just as the freedom fighters went with courage and
The British beat their heads with sticks
And made them unconscious
Even then the next lot of freedom fighters
Went to face the British
With a firm determination

In the same way
Coming one after another
These waves dash their heads against the shore
And get shattered since centuries, and
This mammoth army
Sends a "day" everyday to fight and
It becomes a martyr everyday
Just like our dreams.
Even then we wake up everyday
With renewed enthusiasm
Like the freedom fighters of the Dandi March
With firm determination.

Why can we not sleep
And get up in another world ?
Sometimes in the years that are past
Sometimes in the future
Sometimes in our past lives and
Sometimes we go to sleep
And someone else gets up in our place.

Which is this British government
Against which we are fighting a battle
With the same daily routine
Banging our heads everyday ?

(Note: "The Salt March or Dandi March in 1930 led by Mahatma Gandhi against the British salt monopoly, a campaign of tax resistance & non violent protest was an important part of the Indian Independence movement")
NINETEEN FORTY-TWO

August wounds him. His friends play games in which he does not join.
   His mother is a woman who lives in a cage.
   She is there for the Nation, his father tells him.
That man in brown with the big black keys must be the Nation,
He concludes, and aims a pebble at the jailor's groin.

The boy who casts this innocent stone is only seven;
   But soon he will befriend the frets of an old sitar,
   Urging the strings to embrace desertion,
Conjuring a lost void, till they are taut with images
He cannot bring himself to remember; or cry to be forgiven

For crimes he did not commit yet fears his own. The Mahatma
   He will come to view, with an awkward, half-tormented
   Reverence; and of course, he will be drunk often, proclaiming
In his drunkenness that Gandhi was a great man, though his followers
Were mostly fools, prisoners of a barren blinkered dogma

That numbed them to colour and made them believe the sacred flesh dirty.
   The use of Gujarati he will forbid amongst his sons -
   A coarse unmusical purely functional tongue
That Gandhi thought in, for Gandhi, though of course a great man,
Was wholly unmusical - and then, on an evening, approaching fifty,

He will call home for drinks his raucous bunch of ageing whiskey-swilling
   Peers; and they will talk of simpler days, when the streets were clearer,
   Houses bigger, and the world more habitable, quaffing them down,
Till he produces out of his pocket, as a sort of joke, a miniature Union Jack
And a quizzically brown, fading photograph of a dead British king,
Crooning to himself, till everyone joins in, that surging drone of a song,
    That invokes an alien biblical god -
    And which they all remember standing up for
On schoolboy visits to the cinema, when films were only black and white -
Its cadences turgid, frozen almost, as the long

Last note billows out of the living room like a windy tent,
    And they drain their glasses in quick nostalgic gulps -
    All this, at two in the morning, while at the other end
Of the same long-corridored house, his mother, insomniac,
Knits little dolls for orphaned girls; or looks up from nascent

Amorphous snippets of Gujarati verse at a moonless street,
    Her husband awake beside her, up for her sake; both of them
    Too tone-deaf to recognize, or be briefly wounded
By the drunken anthem their son lifts in praise
Of an empire they waited so long to defeat.

August 15th 2006
Mukta Sambrani, an Indian poet who currently lives in Berkeley, California, was in Mumbai recently. On July 21, she presented her poems at the Press Club in Mumbai, under the Culture Beat series. Speaking of her *Broomrider’s Book of the Dead*, she says that it “shares some poems, some hope and pain with this book, the catastrophic and magnificent events that have marked our lives, the invasion of some of our homelands in the name of justice and peace, the destruction and renegotiation of cultures and perspectives, the shifting and perhaps conflicted sense of home and heart and somewhere, a steadfast hope for peace”.

Mukta sent in these poems especially for 100 Thousand Poets for Peace.

The artifact museum was bombed the day war broke out. The curator and his staff perished instantly. Soldiers were called in to take over the artifact museum. Calloused hands caressed the breasts of goddess statues. I see this young soldier boy keeping the vigil in the halls of ancestors. Some smile in spite of the disfigurement. Anna thinks he fills a notebook with poems. Anna wants to present a rendition of his notebook to the world. She has no doubt he understands everything in spite of his inexperience. To her he is as much a curator as his scholarly predecessor. Anna believes in the potential of things.

FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF THE ARTIFACT MUSEUM KEEPER
US THREE

Whatever inspires-
My wish for you,
Between you, me and the tree:

I want for you to
Want, to feel
Inspired, in all things, fulfilled.

You may not know this
By looking at me
But, you, are important to me.

Throw dice or letters, sugar cubes embedded cardamom
If you will. Feeling thrown by it?
Into the mouth - the place of short keeping.

There is a lot of intention - not wanting,
Not acting without integrity,
Not being an option, every word.

Placement, the wrong emphasis
Or the right rooting - A
Reaching out towards words.

FACING

Contractual
Actually
Contracting
Diction
What? With a name like that?
Identity - Is a place holder?
Whose is it? This blame.

Are we separate
Owing to our differences,
Or colored by prejudice?

The two determine cultural gaze-
Colored by separation or differences,
Or colored by biases and prejudice?
Or colored by the
Color of perceptions, lenses and their gaze?
Who knows the difference
Between History and Faith?

What was the precipitating event?
Who manipulates it?
To what othering is it rendered?

POEMS TALKING TOGETHER

At the interstices of pages
Curving over with passing words-
The lines, the lies of your lives,
We, the sisters of perpetual mourning
Celebrating doors closing,
The charity of giving away
All that was dear all the way
Up until this morning.

A pebble in the river bed or in the gorge
Farthest from the unearthing or illumination,
I continuum, you dolphin, one of two.
What if those things were here- happening?
A range of melding, a cycling back to-
Is that your best line my darling? Holding back
Is? My inheritance of the written word, her me,
Is owing to, dedicated to, her discovery, her I.

To be drenched in what does not dredge up
In the I don't know what I don't know
Except that girl, Anne and love and this word.
What am I willing to give up? Moving
Forward- Nothing. The musculo-
Skeletal resonance, the psycho motor
Activity of scratching paper to peel back
The skin over bleached bone fragment- you.

An assertion of cultural identity- he had
Potential. Where there is great hurt, Is
There great gain? An over- correction of
What? To what? To sway it till it swings really,
What is your excuse actually? My beast
Got away from me. He is righteous.
And to think I almost didn't. Listen
This is the difference between being and becoming.
The point of hubris- pointing to
The moment of illumination- the
Naming of the written word and the named-
Who determines this democracy? This agreement?
To see and to not see- the Holocaust
Is not a joke. I take risks, knock things off,
Call myself a humanist who did not teach you this
Symmetry- don't name me, but to think my mind could construe it.

Listening with eyes wandering all over the face, ideology,
My eyes listen all over your face, wandering, doing
The heavy lifting. The creation of common ground,
The mind of the room if you will.
We are designing agreements, constructing
The mind that is common to this room-
I don't have to tame you. A whole
Lot of obedience brought me to this place.

(He/ r)o

Mercy and the kindness of strangers,
My wits about me, praying to the end,
Brought me here, learned symbols of faith.

My pigeon, hand fed, trotted away toward
The places my palms wont shelter extend,
But grasp all parallels profoundly.

So when like goodness evil in small steps
Might grow, the ground bare fades away, asphalt
Melting, trees razed towers raise he...her...hero.

What makes him make her unremarkably,
Mundane like someone's aunt's cat on the stoop,
In far off village, flame thrown catches good.

The undeniable marriage- form to content,
The humanity of the living line sparking in you
I see the courage of meeting and judgment.

I would love to have you be my justicer,
Call it hiding the obviously tumultuous uprising
Windows, sills and all blown off, blindness follows all war.
THE POET SHOULD NEED NO PASSPORT

Usually I take
The first book that comes to hand,
What pleases me that day I read.
Suddenly I saw that I
Had practised a racist segregation:
All the English poets
Occupied one shelf.
Those whose first tongue was other,
Were set apart on another:
But on the printed page
The poet should need no passport.

I mixed them up,
Wondering how to group them.
Logic won: in strict alphabetical order
Milton stands next to an African
Whose name I cannot pronounce,
I care not if he is black or white.
West Indian jostles South-East Asian;
The Tower of Babel has returned.
We now need specific dictionaries
To explain the many Englishes,
Flavoured by locality,
And translations across cultures,
But on the printed page
The poet should need no passport.

TV WARS

Do you hear the tramp of armies,
The hungry feet going to war?
Do you hear the earth cry out
Under the hammer of the bombs?
At night, can you rest easy,
Or are you haunted
By those terrible TV pictures
Of the dead and the dispossessed,
The sick and the homeless,
The dying and the hopeless,
That gaze blankly into our homes,
The blank stare
Of a people so battered,
They can only hear
The tramp of armies,
The hungry feet going to war,
See greedy hands take away
The last piece of mouldy bread.
And we sit comfortably
And watch the TV pictures
Of the dead and the dispossessed,
The hungry, the sick,
The wounded and despairing,
Scenes from another world.

You can turn it off:
It's only another of those TV wars.
OUR ATOMIC SHORES

That day a hot wind blew from the land,
And carried desert dust, that stung our eyes
And dried our lips. The sea lay flat and crinkled,
Sand-papered by the gritty wind
As brown desert dust blew out to sea.
And other dusts were mixed
Into that rural clay: fertilizer, and,
From up the coast, a more deadly spray.

The winds of the chilly northern shores
Where I was born, likewise stung, lashed us
At every corner, filled our eyes with tiny grains
From Iceland, the Hebrides, from Norway -
Not atomic then, it was too soon, but now...
Who has not heard of those frogs
With eight legs, the foreboding echoes
Of another land, another wind, another clime?

Growing up, with the aspiring plumes
From cooling-towers lacing our horizons,
We bathed on a beach already charmed
By the Creator of eight-legged frogs,
And years later learned of the subtle death
That stalked all those that drank the milk
From cows fed on grass seasoned with dust
That could crumble bones, turn blood to water.

The gift of the Creator is fear:
Those that have children watch them,
Many will have none, afraid they may see
Eight-limbed offspring upon our atomic beaches.
For every Three Mile Island publicised,
For every Chernobyl, there are unknown others,
And as the poisoned dust blows across the land,
The Creator remakes our children in its image.

TV WARS AGAIN

The helicopter hovered like an angel
Over the roofs of the town
And dropped behind the buildings:
We heard the engines cut out. Silence
Descended slowly like a parachute
Obliterating its arrival.
O the bright lights of that angel
Bearing food and doctors,
Landing into the deadly silence.
Then it soared away,
Leaving its emissaries, like so many eggs
Waiting to be hatched, on the ground.
Guns stammered behind the buildings
For a short while, question and answer.
Silence again fell like a white parachute,
Softly, softly obliterating the cries of the dying.
Our TV showed pictures of dead soldiers.
The angel did not return.
OUTSIDE THE SSP OFFICE, LUDHIANA

She says, "Nobody listens to the poor".

I nod, glance at her graven arm: Sakuntala.

Two gold bracelets. Two blue bangles. Two lobes, ripped. Two large gold hoops. Four daughters. Two sons.

Sakuntala says "One boy was killed And they roam free. The police have eaten their fill. Everybody eats."

Fluttering in the waiting room, the paper in her hands is a complaint.

But I am not local press, I say. But I don't even speak Punjabi.

The teenage daughter in black and blue turquoise tinsels, shrinks, blinks. Long scratch marks run down her arm. She looks away.

The waiting line grows thicker. The cooler works hard. I yawn. The dupatta slips off her hair.

Sakuntala says "Four daughters all of marriageable age. And the killers roam free. My boy was twenty-two."

I wish I could help. It is no use telling me. We do not publish this sort of story. I'm not local press, I say. I'm from Delhi. Sakuntala sniffles, sets her dupatta right. "The newspapers also eat. Everybody eats. Yes, yes, I know. You are from Delhi."

Her complaint rolled tight in her fists, Sakuntala says "Nobody listens to the poor."
CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY OF IMMIGRANTS

Like hard cheese, like frozen jelly some things don't spread easily. They have to be cut into tiny bits and placed, evenly, all along the edges like butter on winter bread.

Green, leafy vegetables

Soak for a minute in hot water after you buy. Wash. Drain dry. Eat with bread if there is no rice. Eat raw if there is no oil. Eat with salt and mustard. It tastes nice.

Tear off the bitter stem. Tear off the blackened edge. Tear off misgiving and eat, as if under pledge.

In the threshing season, wait for dusk. Hide in the landlord's shorn field. Pick up grains buried under barren hills of husk.

Scrub the landlord's cow. Gather up her watery dung. Dry out the shit and piss and there will be grain.

Pluck your creeping hopes off a creeping tree. Wash hands before offering the census-taker your wine-red tea. Answer questions wisely. Words carry far.

Find a corner to scratch in. Plant a destiny. Find a corner to stretch in after a noon meal. Find a corner to scream in if a wound does not heal.

Keep the golden balance. Drown the drum if it drums extreme. Remember, at dawn, to fold away the dream. And remember to eat well. Buy lots of greens.

Remember! Remember your green, leafy vegetables.
ELECTIONS, MAHARASHTRA

Where local artisans
create wisdom from clay,
sink deities into the river bed.

Where sugarcane juice froths,
and men on string cots, ejaculate
to a steady beat, salute

saffron flags, while cool
under the umbrella Shivaji stands,
overseeing dry grass, polythene bags.

A bird dives, plunges
into the stone's eyes.
Mikes blast maha-aarties, gags.

Idols don't bleed, perspire
or utter words men can hear.
Swords prop up the canopy;
red tongues roar, tails wag.

UMBILICAL CONNECTIONS

Wriggling like a tadpole,
unafraid of the water is my young
daughter. Yet, when owls hoot,
frogs croak and bees buzz,
her head gooses into my lap.

Oh, my little mermaid,
shall I tell you a secret?

Night is when your mother
drowns herself in brandy.
To granny I return and lullabys
dripping of partition wounds,
a childhood spent collecting
pebbles in the river's womb.

From tiled pools, spacious homes,
the ship carried grandpa
to swampy streams, cluttered camps.
How he hated the water
in those cemented tanks!

Oh, my little one,
ride the waves, breast currents
as Sohini* did on her matka.
Sindhu's banks you may chance upon,
discover the Indus,
our forgotten past.

*Sohini, the heroine of a
well-known Sindhi folktale, braved turbulent
currents to reach her goal.
HER MOTHER’S TONGUE

Shrunken face,  
body stooped, frail,  
varicose veins, arthritic pain.  
Doddering down the road,  
clutching her grandchild's hand,  
bridging the zebra crossing,  
memories resurface...  
'Our ancestry lost', she moans,  
‘cars and carriage, garden and bungalow,  
in Karachi and Lahore.  
Nothing belongs, nothing is ours.  
'Asanjo sub kuch vayo'.*

Her granddaughter,  
hops up and down, recites  
Jack and Jill went up the hill,  
rolls her 'i's and 'o's,  
like the eyes of a potato,  
the convent education shows.

Mummy, I implore, teach her our language,  
dohas and bhajans of Latif and Sachal.  
Mother, dazed by the traffic's haze,  
and last night's party,  
where diamonds and drinks mingled,  
can never quite understand how  
Chatrapatti or some other tongue-twister,  
will stake claim, and on hearing Sindhi,  
the little one may bite her tongue.  
She already mimics our 'funny' language.

Head circling, mother groans:  
'our past was scattered  
with granny's ashes and now  
it will vanish with mine.'

MOULTING

The scales, dark, ribbed,  
perfectly formed.  
The snake had slithered through  
a hole in the cupboard  
made by a famished mouse;  
even as the spider entrapped UFOs,  
and fireflies shed light  
on a dull day when the rain falls  
as if it may sift the earth once and for all;  
as if no layers exist below,  
and a python may never lay a hundred eggs.

The Cielo, smooth, slithery,  
speeds across flyovers,  
breaks through cement, crunches bones,  
hutments collapse, entrails spill out;  
even as television screens look on,  
and tube lights illuminate highways  
on a day when the sun shines  
as if it may emblazon all things divine;  
as if sadhus never levitate,  
and shamans never bait vipers, kraits.

Eyes cloud, clear, headlights blurr,  
venom spurts, blinds, swallows its own kind.

* We lost everything.
A LETTER TO VEENA

You should be here, Veena, making your music on this sugar-baked morning. The din of the riots has turned to a cawing crow shaking its head on my window sill, and I’m hoping, I’m hoping its feathers will not turn to knives again.

You should be here, my friend.

The mists of Bhimashankar are far away from your Canadian winter and quicksilver sun. But they crowd upon me on this sugar-baked day, these gods you left behind, and we did too, as some of us turned to rats and died on our beds to be picked upon by crows on iron sills.

You should be here, my friend.

But why should you be here? So we can pretend there is nothing to run away from as we scrabble through skyscrapers that crumble on us.

Veena, the Piper has turned to a pipe and this music is turning us mad.

The sugar-baked sky is burnt and black in the sun.

How is the sun where you have run away to?

You shouldn’t be here, my friend. We are making music through scattered nights, blind to the crows on our window sills - they merge with the dark except for their beady eyes. And in the mornings, their claws are still, still around the iron bar.

Stay far away, Veena, stay far, it is wise. Do not be too close when the crow flies.
PRAYER

May things stay the way they are
in the simplest place you know.

May the shuttered windows
keep the air as cool as bottled jasmine.
May you never forget to listen
to the crumpled whisper of sheets
that mould themselves to your sleeping form.
May the pillows always be silvered
with cat-down and the muted percussion
of a lover's breath.
May the murmur of the wall clock
continue to decree that your providence
run ten minutes slow.

May nothing be disturbed
in the simplest place you know
for it is here in the foetal hush
that blueprints dissolve
and poems begin,
and faith spreads like the hum of crickets,
faith in a time
when maps shall fade,
nostalgia cease
and the vigil end.

THE SAME QUESTIONS

Again and again the same questions, my love,
those that confront us
and vex nations,
or so they claim -

how to disarm
when we still hear
the rattle of sabre,
the hiss of tyre
from the time I rode my red cycle
all those summers ago
in my grandmother's back-garden
over darting currents of millipede,
watching them,
juicy, bulging, with purpose,
flatten in moments
into a few hectic streaks of slime,

how to disarm,
how to choose
mothwing over metal,
derbelly over claw,
how to reveal raw white nerve fibre
even while the drowsing mind still clutches
at carapace and fang,

how to believe
this gift of inner wrist
is going to make it just a little easier
for a whale to sing again in a distant ocean
or a grasshopper to dream
in some sunwarmed lull of savannah.
PEACE CONCERT

On a dark silent stage
In a lonely drone,
Poems of peace
On a red microphone.

Cobwebs on their palms
Where the bullets went in,
The children hold up their hands –
Their faces so grim.

So civilized we are
With all our know how
So far we have come -
Where do we go now?

Their windows all up,
Cars are driving away.
With guns in their hands,
Kids are learning to pray...

Nobody knows
Who they're bandaging next --
The gutters are holding
A strawberry fest.

Quietly now,
Without making a sound.
Only the children
Lie still on the ground.
A year of learning to share our space.

Let this year be a year
Of watching over those who are near
And yet letting them be -
Allowing them to be free -
Celebrating the marvel of love that is pure -
That gives you wings and lets you soar.

Let this year be a year of Grace

Let this year be a year
When no child sheds a tear
When no cities blow up
When no children grow up
Into men armed with heavy guns
That give even grown up men the runs.

Let this year be a year
Of gentle cheer,
Bringing smiles that never leave
And comforting those who grieve,
Making us kinder than before
Leaving all bitterness at the door.

Let this year be a year
Without terror and fear,
With anger and hate
Kept out at the gate,
With no external wars to wage
Emptied at last of all our rage.

Let this year be a year
When we learn how to steer
Our souls on their paths
Taking spiritual baths
That wash off the dirt that builds up so fast,
As we soar into the sky, free of our past.

Let this year be a year
Of protecting colours that are dear,
Gold that revives us
Green that survives us,
And the blue of the sheltering sky,
Let's drown in rainbows as we fly...

Let this year be a year
Full of love and good cheer,
Warmth starting to spread
From our toes to our head,
A year of peace, a year of grace,

2011 YEAR OF GRACE

It's finally that time of year
Full of plum cake and good cheer
When 2010 must make some space
For 2011 - the year of grace.

Let this year be a year
When 2010 must make some space
For 2011 - the year of grace.
THIS POEM IS A RIOT

You will not see it coming. This
is what you must do. Hide your kids.
Unhood your hoodies. Learn not to flinch
When glass shatters. Learn not to turn
to cries for help. Keep your CCTV's
Where all can see them.
When it comes
Shambling, throw jobs at it. Burn
Your notes in its face. Send your women
Out, breasts bared, tongues in heat. Roll
Your eyes at rolling cameras. Call it beast
When it swings your smoke bombs back at you.
Call it criminal when it cracks your truncheons
on its skull. when it reaches out with flaying arms
leveling cities, call it brother.

LIVING IN PEACE

That is no well. Step away. It is the open muzzle
Of an ancient gun. That line of dew on the tips of grass,
a border class enemies cannot cross. Do not seek shelter
In that town by the river. Their beds are mines; their women,
Caltrops. It is not for us, it is not for you.
You are a coward now. These wars do not concern you.
There are cups to be filled, files to be stacked,
Phone lines buzzing like angry bees. Someone must push
the paper. Someone must stare at flaking paint
While trucks fall off highways, while seeds die on planting.
Someone must do nothing.
    It is alright, brother. I have long lived
With the water in my blood, with the pale
Opacity of riverwashed pebbles in my eyes,
The languor of my floating limbs. It will take a while
But you will learn to unclench those fists,
To turn your eyes in to the fleshy dark of sockets,
To slow the drumming of your heart. Brother,
You will learn a sun that does not sink in blood;
You will know the silence of a floating corpse.
THE COMMON MAN

I am the common man of Narayan
    I am the common man of Kutty, of Laxman...
I am the common man......
    Whose ultramodern watch reads silent digits,
    But life still hears the unending ticks of the omnipresent repeater...
I am the common man.....
Whose inability to become the crouching tiger made him the hidden dragon....
    Whose Woodland shoes only make him more grounded..
    Whose attempts to be romantic with his partner only end up in a soliloquy,
I am the common man,
Who never tried and yet failed to be the revolution..
Who protests against fear, but fears to protest,
I am him,
    The common man whose dreams are as unobtrusive as his reality....
"I am the common man
    I am the COMMON MAN,
    I am THE COMMON MAN".--
I pressed---
The voice remains numb,
Only tears run down.....................
And then the glimmering city lights through the refracting teardrop
Pacify me,
Assure me,
    ..Reaffirm,
    "You are the common man..
    You better be..."
Manner of a Murder  
History has taught us  
The casual nature of lives.  
History reveals  
In bloody accusations.  
History is open  
To misinterpretation.  
History is plain nonsense.  
Here, in my mind,  
I decide  
The end of your life.  
I, messiah/assassin.

Who killed the dreaming people?  
In the islands by the sea,  
Is a dream rectory.  
From far and beyond,  
Fed up of misery,  
Came to dream and see-  
Thousands on a song.  
Prayers were set free  
In a silent aplomb.  
In this land, extolled,  
Does bloodshed belong?  
In the city of gold,  
Who placed a bomb?

A do-it-yourself guide to making a bomb  
When a star studded people  
Become puppeteers;  
Banana republics travel  
Far east, very near.  
A string of slights?  
Spilled tears, no qualms?  
Years of plight?  
What makes, a bomb?  
Paranoia of east,  
In the humdrum of west,  
Dictators, cold war,  
Politics infests.  
Fear of each other?  
Revenge, a sweet song?  
Insult to one's mother?  
What makes, a bomb?  
A handful of dream-cutters,  
Copious amounts of wails,  
A kilo of life-shutters,  
Shocked silence prevails.  
In this war of brothers,  
Where does love belong?  
Every hope smothered,  
What makes, a bomb?
A New Beginning
When was it easy though,
For the little rose bud to unfold its first petal.
It tore apart the strings within
As the petal moved away to disentangle.
But didn't it lead the way,
for the rest to trust and bloom?
To evolve as a rose in entirety,
And lessen this world of gloom?
When was it easy though,
For the butterfly to flutter its wings first.
The pupa held back every chord, raised every throe,
As the butterfly struggled to let go.
But didn't it soon dance around,
Spreading joy, truly mesmerizing,
For the little girl who had paradise found,
Spellbound by its colour; in vain-aiming, chasing?
When was it easy though,
For the hatchling to break through the shell.
The snugness and warmth within it withheld,
Every effort to emerge, to propel.
But didn't it start soaring above,
To encircle the universe?
Inspiring every path to freedom,
Delighting, boosting hearts desiring to traverse?
Let me hold your hand,
As you take your first little step,
To break barriers, move mountains,
As bright horizons your soul pep.
Let me lead you to the summit,
From where the sun is peeping behind,
Ready to shine in your radiant face,
As you let life's beautiful moments unwind.
Hold out your arms, embrace the beckoning,
Behold, this is the herald of a new beginning.
Lift up your hearts, drive the impelling,
Rejoice, this is herald of a new beginning.
Musings

if i have to ask God why
do you think He would blame
the vulture family?

but our spirits remain.
does a candlelight burn
away the loss?

do we have feet to march
to where peace languishes
locked, dusted in the files?

do we carry a voice
which could be heard by those
who are deaf to our shrieks?

there were times when we laughed
and when we cried.
we will cry and laugh again.

can't we stand up and refuse?
can't we say peace?
yes we can and we will.
Vladimir Milenkovic is from Serbia, and currently situated in Greece for a summer job. “The reason I wanted to send the poem is cause it was inspired by Vedas, which are a big part of India's heritage,” he says. The poem has been originally written in English but he also has a version in Greek.

"MAN OF EARTH"

I am a dream of trees - lost child of water.
I am the brother of summer gales - thought in motion.

I am the one who can feel the Sun inside,
one who thinks 'nihil' yet loves all,
one who whispers to moonlight
and caresses the stars.

I will offer my heart to those who will love her
I will offer my eyes to those who want to heal her
Her - Our blue home, our gentle Earth.

And you, you are my brother and my sister
My friend and my joy
For on this world of wonders
You too are with me
Sharing this gem
Living this miracle of being.
You, a speck in the Milky Way
A giant among the pebbles
No greater than an ant
No smaller than a star.

One body
Vibrating with beauty
One mind
Soaring to infinity:

We are the Universe.
YEH HAI BAMBAI MERI JAAN

Yeh hai Bambai meri jaan. Here, dreams lie awake and by-pass the night .If I am lured by page three fame you vie for centre spreads. Come let's meet for old times' sake.

When the shape of your past maps out a face:
A wandering tattoo, a smoldering kiss,
a caress down a musty gully.
Yeh hai Bambai meri jaan. Here dreams lie awake

Listening to the chawl gossip, in the queue for water.
My hand in your hand beneath the newspaper,
we'll tune in to each other, like last time.
Come let's meet for old times' sake.

Let Radhakaki pin her ear to the crack on the wall, put two and two together, when the radio-mirchi brawls with her hari naam.
Yeh hai Bambai meri jaan. Here dreams lie awake

With seasons dhamaka sale,and free exchange vouchers and spouses that recycle with yearly renewal offers, I am yet single and redeemable if you please
Come let's meet for old times' sake.

Ahead in the marathon, when the 8.15 VT local pulls in I'll grab the corner seat, read your palm while others queue in.
Yeh hai Bambai meri jaan. Here dreams lie awake
Come let's meet for old times sake
One cutting chai at our old adda before we part again.
Bomb Blast

I and my Lord
In silence we converse
He listens to my words
Softly spoken
Each word a meaning
of innermost feeling
Lifting me up
To an higher plane.
The aura of his blessings
Surrounds me
Folding me
Filling in all the voids
I am at peace
Cared up
Soaked in
Divine melodies
Rejoicing
Until

A Loud Blast!

Foolish Men!
Why do you hate
This silence so?
I Am Proud it’s ‘My Mumbai’

I never thought......
Mumbai would ever be so helpless
The life-line trailing slowly
The water clogging
The mobile, the telephones and electricity failing
The people wading through
The river of water
Dirty, filthy and smelling
The dream of “the making of a financial capital something like Shanghai” breaking
The entire city crumbling
With the loss of dear ones dying
It looked as though
The Gods were annoyed
And let the hell loose!
Yet in the midst of all this turmoil there were people giving helping hands
to absolute strangers
One word dripping with warmth
To give the courage
To boost the morale
Of thousands of people who walked
Of thousands of people who offered shelter
to stay overnight
Food and water that was offered
Boats that rescued hundreds
To safer heights
Slowly but surely
Mumbai rolled back to normalcy
Cause a million hands
Came to help humanity
This is my Mumbai
I am proud its “my Mumbai”.
कानफाड़ू शोर से,
शौकी के लादे हुये,
घोषणायें अनगिनत,
पर सब के सब आधे हुये।

किसी ने कविता कही,
कुछ बहस कर चल दिये,
दो-चार की कर धर-पकड़,
पुलिस ने हाथ मल दिये।

चीख कर खैटे गये,
फिर खड़े नब हो गये,
रीफ्ले का बना बदा,
रिवाइन्ड सारे हो गये।

बम कहीं कोई फिर फटा,
घर कहीं फिर खड़ गये,
तमाशाई अब भी बस,
देखते ही रह गये।

कुल्ते भौंकते रहे,
गधे रंगते रहे,
हम घरों में बैठकर,
हाथ सेकते रहे।

कुल्ते भौंकते रहे,
गधे रंगते रहे,
हम घरों में बैठकर,
हाथ सेकते रहे।

बम कहीं कोई फट गया,
घर कहीं कुछ था गये,
तमाशाई बस खड़े,
देखते ही रह गये।

कुछ तो बस पायल हुये,
कुछ वहीं पे मर गये,
करते वाले आये भी,
और काम अपना कर गये।

पुलिस की आहट हुई,
जिजी सारे डर गये,
मुर्दूं और करते भी कया,
वहीं पर पड़ गये।

लाशो सब छोटी गईं,
शिनाहट हुईं, बींटी गईं।
जिजी हुद होकर खड़े,
पैदा टॉक, चल पड़े।

लोगों ने हिसाब कर,
जिजी अपने जिन लिये,
जिनके जो भी मर गये,
कीमत लगा लिकत लिये।

हत्क की लोगे चलीं,
उंगलियाँ भी तल गईं,
हर तरफ हरकत हुईं,
कलीटी कुछ बन गईं।
मीनाक्षी भाइरोडेले (Marathi)

दीन दीन दिवाळी

26 जून 1970 जन्मदात्मक दिन मिळाली दिवाळी
म्हणजे तुम्ही नाही, जगाचिसे आहार
आणि विवाह देखील बघून आहार म्हणूनच
जन्मदात्मक दिवाळी एक साहित्यिक दिवाळी
शृंगार, वाहन नॉर्मल, नॉर्मल, नॉर्मल अजून वरेच काही
याच्याच अर्थ जगाच्या प्रभावाचा तात्त्विक रूपांतर
ताताने जाणुन तेंतून तितून लागून
जिंदगी नॅचार म्हणून गोंडी
म्हणजे फक्त तुमचं ‘असं’
पुर्ण स्मृतीची नाही, जगाची वापरे
कुठेच राहायलो आहार, जिंदगी
किंवा चोळण प्रेग्ले जाणार आहार मृत
कस रंग रेंगणे असेल हे प्या दिवस
कुणून वसरली असेल ही तारखांनी देख्नंत जगाच
हजारो नाहीने मासुनं जिंदगीच्या आविष्कार
सुरू सेलं असेल नवीन संवारो कुणून
खंडन कठोरताना इतरपेक्षा
दाहवाळी स्नातके बेहोशपण
कोणताचा तर तरुळ
कुणूनतरी माता मातून
कुणून कुणासाठी तरी होतो श्रेणित
कुणून मुख्तमात्र असताना असलेला
गोष्टीचा तातील सांग
कुणून स्वतःची लावण्यासाठी सीट
गोला करता बेहोशपण, तारखां
अनुपसर्वतात देख्नंत तारखांची
बेहोशपण ‘दिवाळी’
मोह, पोट, रघुणाशाही
अर्णतिंवांनासाठी मनवतो आहार
ज्युता अनु पृथ्वीतिथा
प्रकट दिवस अनि रिवर्णिटिथा बुध
tर काहीचा डोंडोण-तीनतीनाची
शांततेच्या नीरव आवाजाला

फारच आशरच्याच वाटत रम्बट रिअंकेत न होणार्यांचे
कसी राहू शक्तात अस्वात परिस्थितीते टक्केदंडापेप खात विधात ?
की झालेला असतो संसर्ग त्यांना की माफ,केंद्र ?
काहीही कठत नाही
तीर्थने नाही तर मिस्त्र डोक्यांनी बोलत्यासाठी
आपल्या मत्यांना भागत नाही
आजुवाजूंच्या कोणताही गोष्टीवर
मिळावा मन्त्रालयात मनाने तिथी
एकाच्या कमीत नोंदत्यासाठी राहत नाही
सतत चालू असतो अंधकार वाद-संघात अधिक विवादीशी
भंडारातीलप्रेम थेट इतिहासाचारत
अमधी सुटत नाही त्यातून
स्वतंत्र:चारच चुकीला डोक्तरी गेलेली भिंत
डोक्यांसाठी जाकता येतेच नाहीत कांनी नाही
अन चार्जेतप्रेम ऐकत राहणाऱ्याचा लगातात
पुढील वक्तावर गप्पा चकल्याच्या आवाजात
गणपतीलाच नंबर बन काहते पाकूट चकल्लीवे
अनं भरवते प्रेमाने दुस्सरोप वसलेले निर्मलाचा दोषा मारत
माहीम येताच, उत्तरच गणपतील नंबर बन
गणपतील नंबर दो अभागो माधोचांच वाढत राहिले

अनं खाक लगातात सामोसे एकेकार्यका होणा माहून
ल्यांच्याच वाटत सणून खुंबीसारी साखी
अनं ध्वात जाणत गोष्टीसारी बाटते
गणपतील नंबर बनवणे पालकपण
पण लगाच आठवल्यात तिचाही ठोसा मारतानाचा भंडकपण
अनं मह तीनत्रेह वाटत फारवेने टाटेखर मुळवटे आशुबाजूंपै
पुस्तको दृष्टिको परास
खराबदिवील लिंग नेह्यावरी
अनं उघडाली होंबळवरी पड्या हिंदी सिमेनालयासारखी

सादपत राहते नजरत
नुकसान जमालेल्या बाखूच्या नजरतेले भाव
त्यांच निराश रूपण
प्रमुख गोष्टीवर व्यावहारिक निराश रूपण
पण नेमके कार घडात काही कठत नाही
कुठे हर्षान सतत हे मनोकथ रूपण ?
निवृत्तपणे स्वतः:वीती नजरोत गिरत्या घेणे ?
का काठाचा ओढात प्रत्येकता फारच वाटते सोयीच
चेहारावर खुंबवटा घडवणे !
सतत मख राहून के राहणाऱ्याचा रिअंकेत न होता
महात्मांचा माणूसांमधून अर्थात प्रवरण !
कुठतीरी वाचते होते घेणे माणूस मनाने फारच समूह झाला
त्याच्या शालाची घडा भरला
The Co-ordinators

ANJU MAKHIJA

Anju Makhija is a poet, playwright, translator and free-lance writer. She has a M.A in Communications from Concordia University, Montreal, Canada and has worked in the fields of education, training and television. Her plays include If Wishes Were Horses, The Last Train (shortlisted for the BBC World Playwrighting Award ’99), Now She says She is God, Cold Gold, Meeting with Lord Yama and Total Slammer Masala with European Director, Michael Laub. Her other works include, All Together a multi-media production that won an award at The National Film Festival, California (’85) and a book of poems View From The Web. She has also co-edited an anthology of partition poetry entitled Freedom and Fissures and translated the verse of the 16th century sufì mystic, Shah Abdul Latif (Seeking the Beloved, Katha).

She is the recipient of the commendation prize (’93) and first prize (’94) in The All India Poetry Competition organized by the British Council and the Poetry Society of India. She also won the second prize in The BBC World Poetry Competition (’02). Makhija has co-edited a three-volume series of plays by Indo-English Playwrights and an anthology of women’s poetry, We Speak in Changing Languages. Her new book of poems, Pickling Season will be out shortly.

She is actively involved in the literary milieu and was on the English Advisory Board of Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. (’03 to ‘08) Currently, she co-organizes the activities of Culture Beat, Press Club, Mumbai and writes a column for Confluence, UK.

MENKA SHIVDASANI

Menka Shivdasani, a Mumbai-based poet and journalist, has two collections of poetry, Nirvana at Ten Rupees (XAL-Praxis, 1990) and Stet (Sampark, 2003), which was recently reprinted under the imprint of Sound and Picture Archives of Women (SPARROW). Menka is also co-translator of Freedom and Fissures, an anthology of Sindhi Partition poetry, published by the Sahitya Akademi in 1998, and subsequently republished by the Akademi in Marathi and Gujarati translation. She has recently edited an anthology of women’s writing, which forms part of a series being brought out by SPARROW. In 1986, she co-founded the Poetry Circle in Mumbai.

Menka's poems have appeared in several publications, both in India and in other countries. These include Poetry Review (London), Poetry Wales, Fulcrum (USA), Many Mountains Moving (USA), ARC (Canada), and Literature Alive (New Writing from India and Britain). Her work has also appeared in numerous anthologies, including An Anthology of New Indian English Poetry (Rupa and Co.) Confronting Love (Penguin India) and the Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poets, She has also been featured in collections such as Contemporary Indian Poetry in English (Sahitya Akademi) and in www.museindia.com, a literary e-journal from Hyderabad.