

WAVES



ARJAN DEV MAJBOOR

WAVES

BY

ARJAN DEV MAJBOOR

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF KASHMIRI POEMS

BY

ARVIND GIGOO

DRAWINGS

BY

VIJAY ZUTSHI

DEDICATED

TO

DINA NATH NADIM

Published by Kashmir Bhawan
CK-35 (Near CK Market)
Karunamoyee Salt Lake
Calcutta 700 091 West Bengal

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	OTHER BOOKS BY ARJAN DEV MAJBOOR.....	3
2.0	CRITICAL REVIEW.....	4
3.0	TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.....	7
4.0	FOREWORD.....	8
5.0	PORTRAIT OF A CHILD.....	13
6.0	THE BRONZE HAND.....	14
7.0	THE TOPSY - TURVY TREE.....	16
8.0	SNOWMAN.....	19
9.0	WORD.....	21
10.0	FOSSIL.....	23
11.0	THE PAINTING.....	24
12.0	CREATION.....	26
13.0	A GAMBLE.....	27
14.0	THE STAR THAT FELL.....	28
15.0	THE NEW MILLENNIUM.....	29
16.0	THE FOWL.....	32
17.0	LONELINESS.....	33
18.0	THE CITY.....	35
19.0	THE HUNGRY MAN.....	37
20.0	LOVER.....	39
21.0	CHISELLED WORDS.....	41
22.0	SECRET.....	44
23.0	WILDERNESS.....	46
24.0	A FUNERAL.....	48
25.0	THE SIGN.....	49
26.0	A JUGGLER'S TRICK.....	50
27.0	MIND.....	51
28.0	SENSUALITY.....	53
29.0	LONGING.....	55

TABLE OF CONTENTS

30.0 THE DANCE IS ON	56
31.0 ROOTLESS.....	58
32.0 PRISON.....	59
33.0 A POET'S HELPLESSNESS.....	60
34.0 TO THE SWAN	61

1.0 OTHER BOOKS BY ARJAN DEV MAJBOOR

1. Kalaam-e-Majboor
2. Aman Ta Zindagi
3. Obra Sheehh (Kashmiri translation of Kalidas' *Meghdootam*)
4. Leaves of Chinar (English translation of Kashmir poems by R.K.Bharti)
5. Kulyat Lala Lakhman
6. Dushahaar
7. Dazavuny Kosam
8. Krishna Razdan
9. Rahul Sankrityayan
10. Paey Samayik
11. Urdu Kashmiri Reader
12. Kath Te Vath
13. Tyol
14. Tehqeeq

Copyright Arjan Dev Majboor
House No: 207 Ward No: 12
Udhampur - 182101 J&K India
Tele. No : 01992-72063
e-mail : admajboor@rediffmail.com

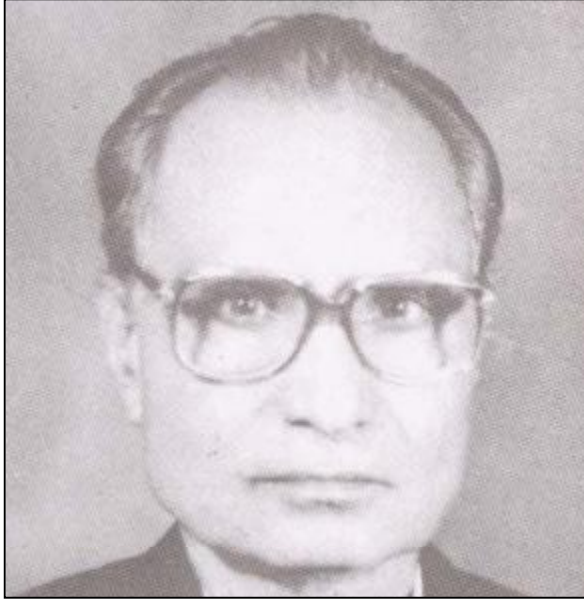
This translation first published: 1999
Reprinted with foreword: 2000

Designed by Nagraj Koul
WZ-743, Bata Chowk
Palam Village New Delhi - 110 045

Published by Kashmir Bhawan
CK-35 (Near CK Market)
Karunamoyee Salt Lake
Calcutta 700 091 West Bengal

2.0 CRITICAL REVIEW

Arjan Dev Majboor, writing in Kashmiri language, living now in Udhampur in the Jammu



province, is a major poet and his thirty poems written originally in Kashmiri, have been translated into English by Arvind Gigoo.

Reading all the poems makes one feel the touch of tenderness, sincerity and a dash of serendipity the poet possesses. The poet has the imagination that rides, and he sometimes is lost in comprehensiveness of the thought, and it is happily noted, that gives a tinge of poetic dignity. He is enigmatic in the poem *The Topsy-turvy Tree*, and what follows is a picture of utter desolation and ruin. He is not optimistic about the world's good things but that does not deter him to see images drawn in Nature but perceived by him

like the one a poet constructs in intellect and expresses in imagination, and the embodiment is the poetic cluster. The poet in the poem *The New Millennium* sees an "eternal Rider coming." He pines for the recovery of lost virtues, but limitation remains bound in the Indian tradition; it does not strive to release itself from the vague to transcend, never gives a flight towards a new height. In the poem *The Hungry Man* he paints a man very nicely who has no address to knock for the culmination of hunger. The poet has no conflict with politics it surfaces, as a poet is a teacher, a prophet, a builder, a protester, an activist (Remember Gunter Grass). In the poem *Chiselled Words* he strives for invention of words which will give the world, to say, a total humanity and ideal place to live in. This pellucid approach is laudable. Surrealistic he is and in that case his deftness has known success. In *To the Swan* there is a journey, a search, an option rather a craving for regaining or resurrecting the old phenomena. A vision towards an order of high enlightenment is also earnestly required now. A tomorrow man is a freedom in thought. There are six core thought-depicting drawings by Vijay Zutshi. All the English translated poems are congenial and don't give the idea that they are translated. A very good publication.

Braja Chattopadhyay

Arjan Dev Majboor is a restless soul ... Although he is a septuagenarian yet age has not touched his spirits. His poetic journey has witnessed many trends in literature and he has been shaping himself throughout according to these trends. He is a dynamic poet.

Maharaj Krishert Santosh

Majboor's *Waves is* a rich addition to the treasure of Kashmiri culture.

Ghulam Nabi Khayal

Each poem in Majboor's *Waves is* a wave from the oceanic mind of the poet. He is a magician using the sleight of words to trick and captivate, a sculptor chiselling words to perfection, a master blender concocting a heady cocktail of words and creating unique imagery by endowing words with movement.

Dr. K.L. Chowdhury

Kashmir lives in Majboor's poems. While reading them I feel as if I were in Kashmir. The English translation of his Kashmiri poems is the way to reach other languages.

Padma Sachdev

A first reading of (of *Waves*) shows the mature treatment of life. I feel certain that the book will be well received in literary circles.

Jayanta Mahapatra

Majboor's poetry is evocative of the beauty and angst of Kashmir. He draws powerful word portraits and at the same time is able to convey a deeper meaning behind signs and symbols. Majboor is one of India's most important contemporary poets. His poetry is characterised by a seamless fusion of the traditional forms with the modern idiom.

Dr. Subhash Kak

The image that *Waves* presents is of a poet deeply disturbed and distressed by the violence and terror that have ferociously mauled human values and the uninhibited sway of hate-breeding ideologies that have put the future of the entire mankind in jeopardy ... Existential problems also surface in these poems and then there is that element of romanticism that cannot hold itself back.

Dr. S. S. Toshkhani

Arjan Dev Majboor is a sensitive poet and a superb craftsman.... In the history of Kashmiri literature he will remain immortal.

Rehman Rahi

Waves reveals the mind of Majboor- vast and deep with troughs and peaks of intense joy and sorrow, pain and nostalgia, wisdom and vision, despair and hope.

Dr. B.K. Moza

Majboor's poetry is marked by deftness of expression, deep introspection, progressive outlook and mature treatment. His work constitutes a muffled outcry of his bruised heart against the disappearance of old values and the disequilibrium of modern life.

T. N. Koul

Majboor's Waves is quite readable. The poems in the volume are enjoyable and uplifting The poet has handled themes with skill, economy and with a surety of touch.

Dr. T.N. Dhar

Arjan Dev Majboor's Waves is the reflection of his partitioned soul caused by the separation from his native land.

Dr. Manzoor Fazili

Waves shows that Majboor, who was a radical progressive poet in his youth, has mellowed into a matured artist.

Ghulam Nabi Firaq

3.0 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In this translation words, syntax and architecture betray infidelity. I have given a different linguistic air to the original; covered the subject-matter of the original with a new robe; freed the imprisoned Kashmiri through compression, interpolation and omission; and strengthened the interrelation between the two languages. In the process there was much loss but the life, meaning and soul of the original continue to throb and flow and vibrate. Transmogrification became imperative for the afterlife of the original. Therefore, I am either a shoeblack or a traitor true to the Italian saying "traduttori traditori" ("Translators are traitors").

- Arvind Gigoo

4.0 FOREWORD

It gives me great delight to write a foreword to *Waves*, a collection of thirty poems of Arjan Dev Majboor, selected and very ably translated into English by Arvind Gigoo of the Camp College for Migrants Udhampur (J&K). This book won an award from the Poets' Foundation, Calcutta, which was presented to Majboor by Chief Justice Shyamal Kumar Sen of the Calcutta High Court on 20 December, 1999. Before this he had received an award from the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in 1993 for his collection of poems, *Pady Samayik* (Footprints of Time). However, awards do not make a man; they are only a visible and legitimate recognition of the stature that he has already attained.

Arjan Dev Majboor (real name Arjan Nath Koul) of Zainapura in Pulwama District (b.1924) saw many vicissitudes in his early life. His calm exterior, which Moti Lal Saqi has called deceptive, belies the turmoil his heart has passed through. He has had a chequered career. Orphaned very early, his life was a courageous and determined struggle against want. Having to keep the kitchen fire alive when he matriculated, he worked for some time in a co-operative bank, then got a job in the court but the experience wasn't very encouraging. In desperation he left for Lahore, where he gained in two ways; he started learning Sanskrit, and meetings with Rahul Sankritayan gave him a knowledge of Marxism, and both these stood him in good stead. He appeared on the literary scene in a turbulent time when a new age was being born, an age which all the writers hailed as the promised millennium. The consequent change it fathered was visible in poetry not only in the mental attitude but also in form and techniques. The *ghazal* was being dropped and some western forms were ushered in. In fact it looked like Kashmiri literature was casting off the slough of old, ossified decadent traditions of thought and technique and acquiring a resurgence of life it had never known before. Not that great poets and writers never existed in the happy valley. In fact the history of our literature starts with a poet who has always remained and will perhaps ever remain unmatched for all time, i.e., Lal Ded. What I mean is that never before did the whole community of writers and all artists, collectively, have a rejuvenating bath at a new helicon, a new fountain of the muses. It is this atmosphere that Majboor found himself in and was led most powerfully into the vortex. True, from Rahul Sankritayan he had acquired a knowledge of how matter shapes mind, but a knowledge of dialectical materialism is not enough to make you a poet. In the new environment he found himself very powerfully influenced by the creators of the new age-Mahjoor, Nadim and the other writers of the new community of progressive writers, and he also plunged in. On his return from Lahore he worked in Prem Nath Bazaz's standard till it closed down and unemployment greeted him again till he equipped himself with a teaching degree and was absorbed in the Education Department.

But despite joining the Progressive movement in fact he also worked as an assistant editor of its journal *Kwong Posh* for some time-he never actually belonged to the movement as a committed

progressive writer like Nadim, Roshan, Zutshi, etc. but was like most followers of the movement, drawn in but always

outside the ring of political commitments, though his firm belief was that literature cannot be divorced from society. His involvement with the problem of the workers and the peasants was unquestionable and always remained, but not in the sloganeering manner. The sighs of the poor and the beauty of nature-forests, rivers, meadows, mountain peaks - are blended in his poems.

His poems, short stories and critical essays have been published in the various journals in Kashmir and outside. He has translated Kalidasa's *Meghadootam* into Kashmiri (*Obra Shechh*), published monographs

on Krishna Razdan and Rahul Sankiritayan (Sahitya Akademi), to mention only the most notable of his compositions. He is not only a poet but also a seasoned scholar and writer who has a number of published material- books and critical articles- to his credit.

"The publication of *Waves* bears testimony to Majboor's serious concern as a scholarly poet for the projection of Kashmir' literary works across the globe. The present volume is a laudable effort specially to serve the objective of reaching a wider readership across the country and abroad. This gives an access to the cultural content of the original poems." (A.N. Dhar). This is what any poet writing in a language with limited readership would invariably desire. But before focussing on the poems presented in this selection, it would be appropriate to have a look at all his poems from the day he wrote his first anthologized poem *Shongaam Yeli Raat* to the present day and how he has evolved as an artist during the last half century.

He has experimented with various forms, and emerged as an essentially nazam writer. And he is most certainly a nature poet. His deep rooted love for the sights and sounds of this Paradise on Earth (which bewitched Jahangir once and continues to leave lesser mortals too spellbound) is easily understood. I find it necessary to mention it right in the beginning to emphasise the fact that it forms the basic theme of whatever he wrote. It remains the backdrop even when he is talking about something else.

His first collection of poems *Kalaam-e-Majboor* was published in 1955. This was followed by *Dashahaar* in 1983, *Dazavuny Kosam* in 1987, *Pady Samayik* in 1993 and *Tyol* in 1995. His creative talent did not confine itself to the field of poetry alone but ranged from short stories to literary criticism, his most notable set of essays being *Tehqeeq*. However, at present we are concentrating on his evolution as a poet. It was a long journey from *Kalam-e-Majboor* (1955) to *Dashahaar* (1983), in which we find Majboor having matured as an artist and having developed a liking for the short poem, which the great poets like Nadim and Rahi had already inaugurated in Kashmir. You find in this collection, simplicity of ideas combined with technical dexterity. One of the significant poems in this series is *Tamaashaa* (presented as *A Juggler's Trick* in English translation in *Waves*). The juggler comes with the usual tabor and entertains the

spectators with what is essentially an illusion. The poet wants to convey that life itself is an illusion, a grand show compeered by a master juggler.

The poems translated by Arvind Gigoo bear 'eye-catching and appropriate titles' and have been selected from the various publications of Majboor. Prof. A.N. Dhar says that "the translations capture both the essence and broad details of the original pieces. Happily the author of the poems and the translator complement each other. As a final fine product, Waves not only reflects the rich content of the originals, but also reproduces the free verse form of most Kashmiri lyrics."

The very first poem, *Portrait of a Child*, where he presents a contrast between innocence and experience is strongly reminiscent of William Blake:

Grown-ups don't remember purity
and
children don't know defilement.

The Topsy-turvy Tree is a picture of the present urban culture depicting a steady collapse of time-honoured values. The following satirical lines convey the poet's idea of the topsy-turvydom of a system with people facing urgent problems like deforestation, water scarcity and pollution:

The tree said:

'Why need water when all are mad?

Henceforth,

flowers will bloom up in the sky,

a whirlpool will trap all,

it will rain acid,

beauty will be auctioned,

the wise will weep,

the ignorant will multiply,

greenery will disappear,

stones will cover the fields,

the lakes will turn into sand

and

moans will resound.

Even memory will end.'

In fact the poem doesn't look like a satire but an unembellished dark prophecy. *The Fowl* presents the stubborn irrationality of the Kashmiri intelligentsia which provides an excellent opportunity to the sensible practical man to have a field day. There are quite a few poems referring to the poet's loss of home, the land of his birth, the land of his culture, the land of his forefathers. He has for the last eleven years now lived a migrant's life at Udhampur, just as others of his community too were uprooted on a fateful black night in 1990 and flung across the Banihal to the arid land beyond. *The Prison* is one such place, a migrant camp in Jammu with two neighbours by its side-the state prison and the cremation ground. The condition of those in the camp is worse than that of those who inhabit the other jail, where fellows are sent for a specific period after having committed crimes, and are set free after that to join their families. Those who come to the camp are absolutely innocent, but their imprisonment is for life, and there is no hope of them going back to where they belonged. The "blossoms" mentioned in the poem are Kashmiri Pandits in exile, living in 'the dark cells' in the camp. Having left the valley when the 'marigold was the last flower of the year in bloom', they have been a monument of patience in exile. *The Snowman* is a picture of their condition. It keeps on melting slowly and silently.

In *Wilderness* the poet has a hope that the period of this ghastly existence in the wilderness will end one day. *The City* gives you briefly a picture of what happened when "the wisest among the people" said:

"Now every-body is to himself;

I am no one to show the way."

It is a fact. It happened in Srinagar. It was this rather than the strong arm of the militant that created a community of refugees. And this community is doomed to exist in a rootless state. The only thing that floods ones mind is endless nostalgia:

Each warm evening

wet memories

transfix my heart and

cripple me.

Hopelessness floods the room,
objects shiver.
My existence is a knot.
Home and river and rustle
flit and pass.

To The Swan is part of a poem in Majboor's collection entitled *Tyol*. The swan is the mount of goddess Saraswati and has the magical faculty of seeing and knowing everything, and sifting truth from illusion. It is of this mythological character that the poet employs to reveal the present predicament of the suffering people. But more than anything else, the poet describes the beauty of the valley which he has lost.

In *Chiselled Words* the poet speaks as the literary craftsman. One sees his preoccupation with the problem of language and meaning. It depicts the poet as a conscious craftsman, operating as a nonconformist in the realm of language, wrestling with words to accommodate them to his purpose. So also in *Sign* he dwells on the evocative power of words.

In the end, I would quote Prof. Dhar again:

"Many poems employ words (as phrasal clusters) that function as images and symbols-a fact that also accounts for their tautness and density of meaning. The poems reflect the poet's broad humanitarian outlook and his serious concern for the preservation of our age-old culture. *Waves* is most welcome as a volume that is innovative in several respects. A lovable book, it makes pleasant reading."

Trilokinath Raina

B/8-48, Tridal Nagar

Yerawada, Pune-411 006

April, 2000

5.0 PORTRAIT OF A CHILD

A portrait hung

on

the wall.

The chubby child

smiled

and opened his Cupid mouth.

I said "Are you my virgin past?"

The rainbow smile vanished,

and the thoughtful child said:

"Are you my defiled future?"

The answer reached me.

Grown-ups don't remember purity

and

children don't know defilement.

6.0 THE BRONZE HAND

The bronze hand
rests
on my heart.

Who gave it life ?

The gem-like nails
are sensuous.

Is it some damsel's hand
or
some goddess'
blessing mankind
or
a hermit's
meditating upon the word
or
Buddha's
when he spoke of Fire ?

Is it some woman's hand
caressing the earth
or an infant's
who wept into existence?
An endless dream
squeezed

into transience.

This wakefulness is dying now .

They say

long ago

the hand detached front the idol..

The hand blessed me

from

the ledge in the corner.

My home

-in a shambles –

is

my nightmare.

I recall the gem-like nails

and

the fingers

and

the palm

of the bronze hand.

7.0 THE TOPSY - TURVY TREE

I saw a topsy - turvy tree.

It said

"Sir, my roots are in the sky.

This way the world will be set right."

I shuddered and said

"What do you mean ?

You are a puzzle."

The tree said

"Be quiet.

You are a rebel.

They will imprison you.

Here truth is proscribed,

the guilty thrive,

virtue has decayed

and

morals are dead."

I said

" Listen !

There will be no forests.

Eagles won't fly,

they will walk.

Love will wither.

Compassion will burn
And
along with the snake,
will enter the cave.”

The tree said :
You are a rebel.
Don't call a day a day
Or
A night a night.
Say that two suns have risen.
All are making merry.
Man is for sale"

I said
"Mister, your roots will dry up in the hot sun."

The tree said :.
“This earth will turn in to a blazing inferno.
My roots don't need wate.”

I said:
"What shall we eat?
Water is life.”

The tree said:
"Why need water
when all are mad?
Henceforth,

flowers will bloom up in the sky,

a whirlpool will trap all,

it will rain acid,

beauty will be auctioned,

the wise will weep,

the ignorant will multiply,

greenery will disappear,

stones will cover the fields,

the lakes will turn into sand

and

moans will resound.

Even memory will end."

8.0 SNOWMAN

One winter morning

they shaped me into a snowman.

Now I keep standing

Erect

and

cold.

The red chilly is my mouth,

the charcoal pieces are my eyes,

the staff in my right hand

is

my prop.

My left hand is not empty.

Silence prevails all around.

They come and tell me

"Laugh

and

play

and

dance

and

walk."

But I melt slowly,

crackup leisurely

and

drip because of the sun.

The tendril round my feet

Watches

this invisible shrinkage.

9.0 WORD

The Word

unfolds upon the surface of the lake,
falls like a snowflake upon the bank,
splits darkness into bits,
preserves Man,
peeps through the chink like a flowery dream,
comes out of the old wound,
reels in the sky,
snakes like a dejected man,
carries the message across the mountain,
brings good tidings from the unknown land,
spreads my speech in the world,
speaks out the pain fearlessly.

Without the Word

the world will be mute
will be frightening

The Word is

my morning and evening bow before Him.

The Word is

my breath.



10.0 FOSSIL

The face is petrified,
the voice is frozen,
the yellow teeth gnash,
the veins are shrunken
and
the forehead is nailed.

The look has the tremulous dazzle
Of a buried civilization.

The true,
the good
and the beautiful
shine.

A living fossil of past ages.

11.0 THE PAINTING

At night
the painter's imagination
ran amok
and
gave this picture.

The Ganges flowed down the sky
to make
wreaths of foam
and
hills of corals.

Shiva danced a laugh
and
the whole
became a cosmic laughter.

White clouds shrouded the mountain-peak.

Who dug the stream of milk through
the mountains
and
froze it for a walk?
The earth -aglow –
played the host.
The stars,

like white doves,
formed a cluster.

An oriole called.

The painter merged into the picture.

The two became one.

The one,
in the circular collage,
is the touchstone.

12.0 CREATION

Existence
surrounded by embers
spins
on a needle point
churning the ocean,
sucking blood,
swallowing the sun,
collecting honey from a matchless flower,
gathering gems in a tempest,
looking at the dazzling light,
offering life to a smile,
playing a game with a gaze,
towing a broken boat in the lake,
cleaving one into many,
tying all tremors,
taming a lion,
stroking the dew with looks
and
weaving a garland.

13.0 A GAMBLE

Songs hiccoughed,
legends were knotted,
words were petrified,
the body was burnt

Sad happenings!
Life!

The postmen of death
deliver the jive.

Pests with ugly faces came,
the firmament turned red,
there was a flood of tears,
the full heart burst open,
the bird was aghast.

Children became eats for the jackals.

A pebble is gambling with the mountain.

14.0 THE STAR THAT FELL

A star in the black sky
peeped
through the window pane.

I said:

"I am lonesome like you
lonesome like a milestone."

Words travelled
but
conveyed nothing.
Everything remained unsaid.

My eyes longed for the star
but
a lightning
burnt the black cloud.

The star fell.

My look halted.

15.0 THE NEW MILLENNIUM

With a star on her forehead
Saraswati
riding the white -winged horse
comes
spreading celestial light.
All are afrenzy.
This wild chase
is their only hope.

Around whose head will the swan swerve?
Who shall she bless ?
Who shall she feed with divine milk?

The Muses are out escorting the Rider.

Peace is hers.
Knowledge is hers.
Even the Word is hers.

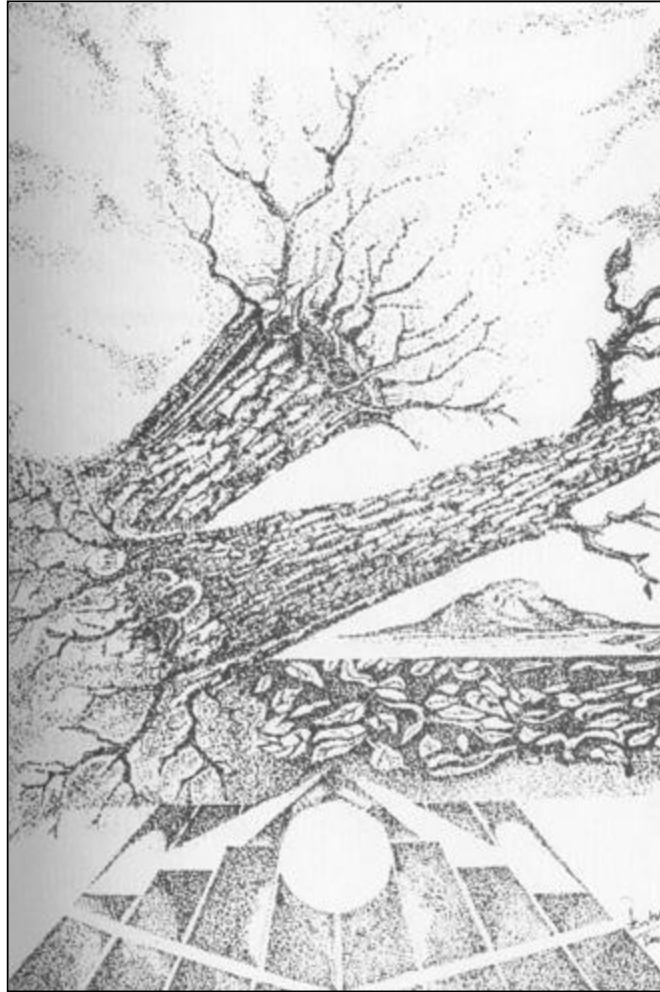
The image of wonders
is
in her hand. (We call it Science.)
Suddenly she proclaims:
"Arise !
Reshape the world,
Purify it,

Burnish all Arts,
Peel off dryness,
Destroy all flaming desires."
The world is astir.

All say
"The Saviour sees through the veil."

Welcome the Rider and her band.
Thus
purity will reign,
darkness will vanish
and
fear will go.
Melt all weapons
for
they kill.
The seed and the sickle and the water
are
the need.
Love
and
prevail.
Peace will flower.
The eternal Rider
-the new life-giver-
with a mirror in her hand
and a star on her forehead
is out with the Muses

to enlighten
the new millennium.



16.0 THE FOWL

One said

"Wonderful!

The fowl has two legs."

Another said:

"No, the fowl has four legs."

The stubborn are foolish.

The third came

with a swollen head

and

a bulging belly.

He said:

"Wrong! You are wrong.

The fowl has only one leg.

I will continue repeating that

the fowl has only one leg

even if you don't agree."

A cat pounced Upon the fowl

and

had a hearty meal.

17.0 LONELINESS

Make your loneliness
lacquer you
and
touch
the bottom of the
secret's depth.

Make sweet and sleepy
moments
of
past remembrance
drink
manna.

Saunter around the stars, and
show
consciousness the crossing for Time is a speeding jet.

Paint your existence
in the mind
and
sing without the lyre.
Forget the origin
and
the end;
and

step on this and that.

Impose a fine upon

indolence,

collect honey

and

crown

your desolate life.

18.0 THE CITY

A camel ran amok
in the city.

The wisest among the people said
"Now everybody is to himself:
I am no one to show the way."

There were a thousand masters,
a hundred thousand rulers.

Now
in the city
each is to himself.
The ones who could see
have run away.
The rest,
stone-deaf
only prattle
and call this frantic blindness
freedom.
The blind believe
they are sages.
People walk barefoot.
Shoes cap their heads.

The blackness will not go

even if you wash up the crow.

A camel has run amok

and

the city is babel.

19.0 THE HUNGRY MAN

The evening shadow fell upon
the sinful city.

There was stillness.

The street lamps shone,
the window panes turned gold,
the frolic-lovers drank to their fill?
the kitchens brightened,
the sellers counted coins.
The streets were deserted.

A lean man
with a sack
was searching his fats.
He picked up
rags,
plastic pieces.
broken spoons
and
put them in the, sack.

Hunger was his lone companion

At last
he found the Stone
and paused for a thought
but

put the Stone into his sack
and
moved on.

20.0 LOVER

I came
made sacrifice
and offered
Coming
sacrifice
and offering
were syllables. breaths.

My bath in the flames as a game.

This incense is my history.
my being,
my becoming.
my fullness.

I am a cradle for storms.
The finale struggles
in my oceanic mind.

The solitude of beauty
is
dear
but
dearer
the search for a ray
in darkness.

Why fret

New twigs will sprout
the mirror will speak
the earth will smile
the rising sun will watch
her dream and her dance.

21.0 CHISELLED WORDS

I said

"I offer you words."

They said

"They are useless."

I said

"I sculpted them. Take them."

They said

"They have lost meaning.

Give us new."

On the street

I saw

a scarecrow laughing

at

the bent huts.

The wise hang from

paper-pegs on the walls.

From the shoulders

I shook off

noisy phantoms.

With horrid faces

they danced like mad.

I sat still

on the balcony
and watched all.
Everything was pell-mell.
But soon
a soft murmur consoled me.

I snatched
the cloth,
the sunny spot
and the mirror reflecting virtue.
They are my help.

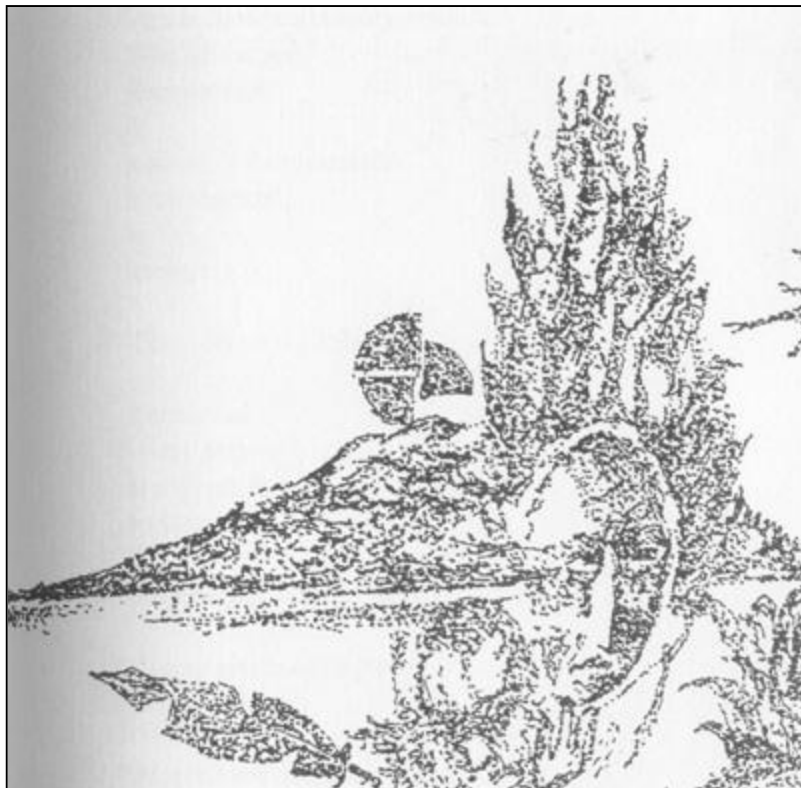
I heard a call
"What do you desire?"

I said
"Give me words,
the miracle of words.
Give me
the springs of love,
the grey dawn,
basketfuls of flowers,
the dancing shy moon,
fragrant colourful dusk.
They will wash the pale earth.
and cover it with light.
I have to sweeten
stale conscience
and

light lamps in the dark meandering
streets
for
the thinking to walk through them."

Once more
I chiselled words
and
embellished them.

Then I said
"Words, I have given you life.
Come out of the prison afresh.
Old canons don't become you."



22.0 SECRET

This hidden secret is my treasure.

Why lift the veil !

Each moment

is

a dance of the mountains.

Each moment

is

a torque.

The noisy world is fleeting.

The thread

-my path-

is a labyrinth, a maze.

Time laughs a laugh.

Colour gives out fragrance.

What a miracle !

People have forgotten

that

autumn set in early.

Forgetfulness is prison for some.

The silence of the night

And

its solitude

are a hope for the morning.

This hidden secret is my treasure.

Why lift the veil!

23.0 WILDERNESS

I spent my age
writing this legend.

But the pages
leapt towards the sky.

A dusty cobweb
Besieged me.

Time was at work.

The fault was not mine.

A few moments were given to me in trust.

The world maligned me.

Now
stranded in wilderness

I
wait for
the tree,
the water
and
the light.

I am the mosaic.

My glass-house will not crumble..

Each day

I light a lamp in the whirlwind.

I am a stage of the caravan.

Peep into me

and listen to the ancient ballad.

It is endless.

24.0 A FUNERAL

The long bright day enters into the black night.

There is a cold funeral

and

with crooked and distorted faces

the mourners squelch through the ooze.

Decay is the pilgrim.

The oily black stallions canter past.

It is point - to point.

I also hold the reins

But

Who pulls them?

A lone boat

is voyaging in the panting muddy water.

The rudder is not visible

nor

the boatman

Man has to tighten the string

and

use the plectrum

inspite of

the funeral

25.0 THE SIGN

The old and beautiful book
masks all meaning.

The squiggly signs
hide
the essence.

They tried to know
the meaning,
they even smelled
the signs
but
what they saw
was a frightening blank.

Their dazed faces read
that
the sign is
the strength
and
and wonder.

26.0 A JUGGLER'S TRICK

The day happened,
played upon the tabor
and
frisked away like a juggler's trick.

The hot sun cooled off,
erased my existence
and
left.

Cold night climbed down
naked and mad
with the moon on her face
and
a necklace of stars
around her neck.

The anklets jingled.
The night stole my being
and
frisked away.

Even the night proved a juggler's trick.

27.0 MIND

With a rock heavy upon his head

he stammers

"All will be ash.

Even the birds will not sing."

The silver anklets have turned

black

and

mute.

People are lost in the desert

and

the sun is hidden behind the dark clouds.

The mountains will sink into the oceans,

hay will become steel,

water will reach the rim of the well.

My mind is mercury .

Wild!

Doesn't stop-,

doesn't even listen.

Again it jumps out of the window

to race about

in the sky.



28.0 SENSUALITY

I

Fire blazed
in the lion
near the door.

The lion clawed
the face
and said
“My flaming desire is satiated”.

I shivered,
came back,
chewed jaggery
and
swallowed poison.

II

The hunter was about to hunt
the prey
when
her look
turned him into the blood-soaked prey.

III

She-
the silvery full moon –

shed tears
near the window.

The bearded old man mumbled
"God! Me!?"

29.0 LONGING

Consciousness sped fast
to reach
the center

The uptight scorpion crawls beneath the sole,
flames waltz with a guffaw,
clouds jig wildly,
skin glues on to the thorns.

But
the old fancy remains
unfulfilled-
the fancy to hover in the sky.

30.0 THE DANCE IS ON

A swallow flew in
with the breeze
and
bathed in fire.

Words and lips
stuck

Fragrance spread over the roof.

The swallow
searched for a nest
and
finding none
trembled.

Hennaed cobbles have,
illuminated civilization.
The swallow flew away
with her desolate longings
looking back,
again
and
again.
Once more dreams intoxicated her.

There
at the foot of the hill is a cottage;
and
a full -bodied virgin,
springing like a roe,
radiates saffron hue.
The winds blow,
springs bubble
and
infinite flowers bloom.
The meadow is full.

With the two lamps in her hands
who shall she kiss ?

The dance is on.

31.0 ROOTLESS

Each warm evening
wet memories
transfix my heart
and
cripple me

Helplessness floods the room,

Objects shiver
My existence is a knot.
Home and river and rustle
flit and pass.

Hope is hazy.

That city is a litter of
broken bricks,
burnt house
and
choked gutters.
Their present,
our past and your future
fall to pieces before the gun.
The gaping wound
speaks
of broken man's
chopped fate

32.0 PRISON

That gaol is comfort.
Release from it means sweet home.

This gaol is torture.
It has fetters for the innocent.

Heritage has gone astray
because
the past has burnt.
Blossoms have bloomed
even in the dry sand.

In the dark cells
they still try to know-
On the door of hell
they yearn for their yesterday.

Patience breaks stones
and
tired eyes recall
the marigold
and the green leaf.

There is a crematorium
by the prison gate.
The prisoners smile.

33.0 A POET'S HELPLESSNESS

I cannot weave the Word
for
the tools are broken,
the mind that was frenzied office is cold.
the sapling is dry,
the call of Time--the Gambler--is frozen,
the dew is ashen,
the dust veils all openings.
the potter's wheel is still,
the pot shreds fill the room,
the feathery dance of the peacock is over,
the glass houses lean towards a fall,
the window panes have cracked,
the twelve signs are a jumble,
the wrinkled heart is in fragments,
the infant petals are prickly hard stones,
the goblets leak.

I search a bodiless existence for poesy
but
Samson is nervy
and
the pearl is ash.

34.0 TO THE SWAN

A poem in exile



I opened my heart to the swan,
sat him on
the chariot of my liquid memories,
made him
recollect the heavenly green spot.
I wove a wreath of past events,
held a mirror of Time,
showed him the scarred hush of my being.

His thoughts sped fast

and
in ecstasy
he ruffled up his wings.

Then I said:

"Yours is the infinite freedom.
Glide in the sky
and
inspect the world that was mine once.
Fly over the mountain peaks
and
find out the source of light.
Be careful
when you see the blinding fog.

"You will face clouds
enveloping the mountain tops.
Peer through the fluffs
to find the right path.
While flying over the grasslands and woods
don't give your throbbing heart
to a forest damsel.
Pick up the essence
from the flowers,
dye your Self in the jungle light,
pour love into the cup of your thought,
shower kisses upon the milky snow.

And then

come back
with the wonder.

"Rest near a small spring
and
get at the safe airy bridges.
Sit in the crotch of a tree
and
glissade through the crevices.
The clear mountain rivulets
will
wash you a warm welcome.

Tell them:

'This haste promises a light.
Bless me
for
the task is sublime.'

"When the night falls
shin up a fir tree
and count the holy days.
The wind will give you
blissful peace;
juicy fruits shall be yours.
Listen to the symphony
of the trees in the forest.
Let your mind swim
in the icy water.
Nature collects silver for you.

"If you get tired
rest on the golden hay
on a hill top.
Spread your wings in the sun
and call up
your old pathways.
Your resting place will come.
You will breathe in the sweet air
away from the city.
Bliss will be yours.
From afar they will say:

'Look !
That is a tiny bird
on the wing
or
a morning lotus in the lake.'

"Lush greenery will enchant you.
You will hear Meaning
in the tune of the lute.
The goal is distant
but
you will reach the blooms.
Plead with the cliffs for the time
when splendour glistened,
when glory ruled,
when wisdom flourished,
when strength held fast.

"Time,
an eagle.
flies.
Catch it.
Cover the glebe with shyey love.
Don't let the colours
benumb your sense.
Gather the herbs that cure
And
burn the thistles that prick.
Strut over the aerial passes
that connect mountains.
Bid fear adieu.
You will reach the goal in time.

"Fly and hover above
the green fields.
Cuddle a longing in your lap.
The glaze of the boulders
sings a legend.
The landscape will recount
a new and fresh tale.
You will see the Full
when you unveil the mystery.
You will measure
darkness with light.

"You are my smiling innocent childhood.
Yours is my strength,

yours is my necklace of pearls.

Warm sunny days

and

cool sleeping nights are yours.

Yours is my fiery youth,

yours is my love.

You have the kernel of the Word,

you know the shape of the path.

You have seen

the flash of the moment.

"Have courage

and

dark death will not shadow you.

He

who sees all

lives.

The throne that life sits on

is a thorn.

The wise have said:

‘Time is holy. Use it well.’

Decipher the words

before you speak

for

tomorrow is unborn.

Look, Noah's Ark is caught

in a tempest.

“White clouds and the rays

will weave a shawl.
Dark clouds will flee,
the huts will take a new shape,
the walls that divide will crumble.
Spread love over the hamlet
and
villages.
Rest their images
in your eyes.
Wish all well
and bless them.
Change the flames into flowers.

The ocean of my remembrance
is
before you .
Choose carefully;
separate the true from the untrue;
view all
and come back with truth.
I will deck the sanctuary for you
and
hug you at the diamond –studded gate,.

"You will see infinite blossoms
and green patches.
You will feel icy winds
wash up shy bushes.
At sundown

the angels in white
descend
and
whisper honeyed truth.
Get me an image of the scene.
Get me sweet water.

"Somewhere water is ready
for a tango.
In the past
kings, courtiers and travellers
drank there.
Saints counted beads on rosaries
and
hermits meditated.
A place for all
to go into a trance.
Implore all
to restore peace in the valley,
to cure all aching wounds
and
to end grief.

"Goggle at the Seven Springs
to know
that renunciation is Reality.
The ripples will play
among the boulders. The waters
retell the tales of the Nagas.

Piety will swill stone.

The soul of the valley is pure.

"Ancient ruins are asleep.

Awaken them

with the woeful tale.

Murmur my agony. The mountains shine

and

the silver glitters.

The saints' prayers

echo

from every corner

and

arouse the thinking.

“Like a lioness in rage

Visho flounces from Kaunsarnag.

Cataracts flow from her lovely daughter.

The water will last

the long winter.

Clothed in blue

she longs for rest.

A stag capers

in a deep canyon.

"The heavenly spot on the river-bank

is nature's work.

Springs are there

and uplands pimpled with flowers.

You will see numberless cool shadows

and

the image of the sky.

Long ago

Janmayjya made fragrant

offerings to the gods there.

Step over the spot.

Fetch me a swig of water

for

I am parched."

(From: *Tyol*)