

MY MIND BLEEDS



Amarendra Chakravorty

Foreword

*When a newly-built supermarket by a slum
burns my eyes, I shift my look to the flowers
and listen to what they say.*

Amarendra Chakravorty





*To all those I met during my visit to Georgia,
Romania, Mongolia and Czech Republic.*

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Some of these poems were written in English and others translated from original Bengali by Sanghita Sen, Nityapriya Ghosh, Sibaji Raha, Pratap Kumar Roy, Prayag Bandyopadhyay and Amarendra Chakravorty



Lemon Leaves

You talk to me of gentle love,
You lure me to the dazzling stars,
You tempt me with life that could be,
You tell me of God, as I should know Him.
Were they each a lemon leaf,
I would crush them in my palm
And know.





Fire Burns

I do not like anything anymore—
Whose country is this?
Where is the green grass under an ancient blue
to sit together with you?
The sky was like a child's eye,
Who made it murky like a rotten egg?

I see all
I do not cry
I do not pray
Fire burns
in my eyes.





Obstinately

So long the words don't come through the storm
So long the essence of fire doesn't light the lamp
So long the symbol isn't struck by the strains of the
road
So long the pattern isn't set by the incorporeal air
So long the joy isn't created out of chants from the day
to day to life
So long renunciation isn't derived from arrangement of
words—
all the time, oh the blank pages, I'll sit by you,
even at the graveyard and beyond,
I will sit by you, oh the blind pages,
until you are awake.





In a Dream Last Night

I was very proud in a dream last night
usually I had to spend many nights in police custody
as I cycled at dark without light.

Never did I desire a girl for I had no home.
I never contributed a penny to flood relief funds.
I could not stand up in a crowd and shout—
"I do not approve of these times!"

Yet last night thousands of poems fell on their knees
before me
like men in a vast field in Id prayer.
I refused to accept their obeisance
and told them: "I give you 24 hours time to change
this age of ours
and transform it into an affectionate woman,
or else, I will destroy everything.
Beware! It's me, Amarendra Chakravorty!"





You

I thought the wind blows for it cannot help

Now I know it is not true

The wind means you.

I thought birds sing on their own

Now I know it is you,

Calling me in the guise of a bird.

When I see a cornfield or a river or a changing season

I know instantly

They are neither a cornfield, nor a river, not even a
changing season

I see only your body.





A Love Letter

I have been collecting
words and wounds
and flowers and faces
and sorrows and sufferings
rains and rainbows
throughout my life to write a poem
in a language only eyes speak.

My heartbeats spell love without a break

I'll takeover a radio station someday
and broadcast my heartbeats.





Notes Towards Writing Poetry

I was in a crowd
and I was alone
I was my poem's
blood and flesh and bone.

I was in the sea
and on a high mountain
I need you to share
my unwritten pain.





The Remains of the Word

Only ashes and dead shadows are left in hollow words

Crying out I pray to men in shopping spree–
Grant me glowing words in the dark path to home

Or else how would I face my daughter
Under the broken column,
beside the gravestone!





My Mind Bleeds

Seeing the world dying everyday

My mind bleeds

This is the way

The world passes its day

In a broken earthen pot

Under the Ethiopian sky





My Way Out

Let a bird perch on my shoulder
I can't walk alone any more

Let there be moonlight on my tears
I can't see any more

Let the life of the hunter be blessed
with teachings of Buddha
I can't endure the wailings any more.





The Quest

I roam the roads of the world
To find the bank of a blue river in a woman's eye.
I am covered in dust
The body yearns for sleep.
Have I not fulfilled my quest?





Lines from the Fire and Storm

1.

Love is the best attribute.

Woodfire in a winter month.

2.

Let people be under proper care

No other way is left there

3.

From the lashes of the storm

poetry gets its form.

4.

Stars in the sky
Flowers of the earth
never know for sure
the date of their birth.

5.

Sorrow yearns for words
Anger seeks words
A tempest of words
How can it take revenge without?

6.

Tired and bored with my city,
my father left for the village where he was born.

7.

Age-old plants
wicked cattle shave them off.

8.

A few of my words, commitments unfulfilled
claim immortality of the banyan seed.





Travelogue

The day I start walking
all along the sea-shore,
I discover countless waves
playing with the fisherman's boats.
And once at Cochin
even I had the glimpse
of a sunset caught
aflame in a fisherman's net.

Again, another day
when I start racing the road
downhill
I have a feeling
that I'll get back everything
gradually, one by one, lost before.

I look startled
at the strange sight
of human faces
like tender leaves
of a tree.

And sometimes I've seen
thousands of floating lamps
whispering unknown prayers
on the river Ganga
at dusk in Hardwar
or at dawn in Benaras.

We must keep
the lamps glowing on the river
until its merger in the sea.

And one day I will leave behind everything for you
simply folded in a single lotus leaf
luminous on the waves.



The Terracota Horses from Bankura

The earth after mating with water, sun and fire
Turns into horses.

The horses with neck erect
Go abegging in open market for a morshell
and search for their father
and for their mother.





Flower as I see it

A flower
does nothing
only blossoms

prays for nothing
but light

craves for nothing
only offers
itself





Alone in a Desert

Alone in a desert
Under the burning sun
I only remember how many mercies were written
I only remember how many flames were written
I only remember all those pains, written
And I remember how many religions were born
Yielding not a drop of water.





A Prayer of the Living

I saw my mother in my dream.
She was in her last new attire.

How can man be happy
How can tree be evergreen
How can water be freed from arsenic
I could have asked her before she disappeared.





A Ballad Called Life

Life now means the whimper of pigeons in an attic of clouds.

I can find you nowhere:

In balcony

nor in the garden,

nor in the bathroom

Not even in any book.

A tidal spring flows the fiber of your hair along its water

A wisp of your hair hangs from the paw of a nocturnal creature

The fire of incense sticks has set ablaze your hair.

Won't you wake up ever?





Under the Cloudy Sky

Did I forget my umbrella?
Or have I lost it?
Or someone has got it stolen?
Such thoughts don't matter
Under a cloudy sky.





Nile Cruise

Finding a grain of rice on the ship over the Nile
I reflect thus—
This grain of rice
This flowing river
Were all about the essence of life
Sprouting the chant along the ways of morn.

Sailing on a ship over river Nile
A few thoughts dawned upon me—
Musings over Bangla poems,
Image of a twig or rice grains, and
I thought of the fire that
Set my home ablaze.





Memories of Life

I remember the year when I was born
Vaguely though I bear in mind a river skeleton
There was a god called fire
There was a lake, mercy and compassion
I still remember the scent of the plants giving
medicine
A wish was bound to the tree
Though the time was purely demon-free
Seasons were like patron gods
The blue flower has lost its azure
Violent red is now time's adore.





Baruipur

In my village Baruipur,
I had a tamarind tree.
Perhaps not, but its shade
surely belonged to me.

A little monkey lived on it,
a rather smart fella,
I taught him on rainy days
to sit under an umbrella.

The washerman's donkey, the farmer's ox,
fishes in the pond.
I named them all and, I could swear,
of me they were fond.

All the roads in all directions, far as I could see,
had been there, I knew well, just to beckon me.
The rail-bridge was reserved for me every afternoon,
to bid the setting sun goodbye and welcome the moon.

That was many a year ago.
The pond, my pets, the tree,
I pray, are still the same today,
and belong to a boy like me.





Journey to the Future of Poetry

Man has been as complex as crime though his
shadow remains simple

As a consequence, only as a consequence of that
I brought this venom today.

What does poetry say?

Even sky descends with all its cloudlets and flying
kites

Amidst the mucky water called life resembling a
torn cloth.

Intolerable life

Crawling at the knee of a Man.

Only an uncertain shack he has as his own

Tears roll down

That's all he has.

This water is not counted

In the account of earth's three fourth share of water

Where and how the animals cry, the cry of birds in
despair, crying out of a domestic dog feeling the
distress of home.

Where and how one steals a pool and a pond

I've seen all these sitting next to an arrangement of
poetry much awed

In various seasons of these ten-twelve years.



Cursed was this sight, even pains were there
I've seen ants rallying in a queue before rains– in a
haphazard line though bound home
I noticed the depression of crying crematorium and
peeping ominous seasons
It was hectic and as a result
Today I bring this poison.

Let's talk of the crematorium.
Marbled floor full of carcass
Amidst them there is mom
Who's crying for whom is difficult to guess.

Let's forget about personal pains
When there's turn– you've to push her
To the red face of fire.
The only reaction being "Is that all?"

Last fire set on her face– does mother hair embrace.
Old Ganges was ready, as usual everyday
The remains I submit to the eternal Ganges.





Poets are known for their fame
We salute in their name
Someday they were on picket
Pain stricken face, mercy, gems of human heart
Number of books raised, the numbers of editions
promoted,
Evaporated that face, that much-cherished azure
anecdote
Now the poet himself is a new civilization.

Letter like touchstone
Would be searched by none?
We'll meet, we'll meet again
Because on this plain
Those who got to know all secret sin
Gave the sleeping an a awaking din
They are there— listen to that now.

Under the noise of their speech
The city remains awake with their dead child
beseech.
Think about the town
Pressure mounts from up, from down
Make space, make space— accommodate
People moves out of home at a greater rate.

"Demolished be this house, before that the trees"—
Saying this they chop them at night, the house is now
in debris



Poets do not raise a voice.

These trees making you breath in your city

Expects their life from a poet's line in conformity

Expects a fire for their abuse from a poet through
poetry.

Pains in poems, curse, rage and ire

Is craved by trees even in consequence dire

Vulnerable are trees, air and poet's motherland

Is it the end

Does poetry terminate in graveyards, crematorium?

Is a poem remains of a poetic dream?

Know for sure– a poet's verdict is

A requiem rendering people's voice.

On the way, in every household

Man's groaning in summer, in winter many fold.

In a poem wrapping a handful of rice

Calling whom to say what in disguise.

Is it to wash away in poets' tears?

Polluted water, swirling water, the poet alone is crying

Swirling in dance words, entrenched the poet prying.

Even the clouds are scared or appear to be ill

Bowing surrounding

Torrents are going to drown

Hence I brought this venom.



Fire

You senseless fire
How many worlds
You need to burn?

 Show me the first blaze
 the first moonlit night
 the first rainbow.

I'll then leave you
In the eyes of my child.





A loquacious college student, Amarendra Chakravorty was moving between certain congenial houses spread across the city to set up an ideal forum for the discussion of modern poetry. Almost single-handedly, with the money saved from his allowance, he brought out an austere monthly in May 1966 with discussions of five poems. Uniting the title of two predecessors of opposite bents, it was called *Kabita-Parichay*. From the very second issue, an interest grew up around this magazine devoted to poems rather than poets. Writers like Ayub and Buddhadeb contributed unasked. Bishnu Dey commented in the August issue: "Our education system has virtually ensured that we neglect the poem in favour of the poet's life and philosophy. Hence an effort like this is specially valuable."

Shankha Ghosh

"The Literary World of Modern Calcutta, 1941-1980".

From: Calcutta : A living City

Ed. Sukanta Chaudhury, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1990

