

Four Poems on Shimla

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NOT ONLY THE OCEANS

(Shimla, December, 2015)

Not only the oceans,
mountains too have their secrets.

You will say the laughter
you hear from afar
is the sound of waterfalls.
No, it is seven fairies laughing.

These little crisscrossing pebbly
paths are ways that lead you
to different worlds. You may reach
the netherworld or the world of the dead.

Those wild paths that go up may
lead you to the Moon or Mars or Heaven.

Don't mount those horses:
The black ones will take you to the Middle Ages
and the white ones to solitude.

Did you see that blue bird?
It was a violinist in its last birth
and that brown bird was a drummer-
just as this white stone here
was a star.
The people here
call salvation water.

It is at night that nothingness,
beasts and ghosts come out.

The ghosts are mostly
of the White who once ruled here.

Don't be scared, they are no more;
only their guns live on.

Go through that tunnel,
and you will reach Hell.

That is where the subjects live.

They have been weaving
a blanket for centuries.

When it is done, this place
will come to an end.

This posture of the earth,
lying on her back,
eyes closed, knees in the air,
is an invitation.

You cannot refuse it
nor accept it.

None who came here has gone back;
and, as for her,
she never parts her legs.

I SPEAK TO MY GLASS

(Shimla, March, 2016)

Alone I sit in this valley of crickets
in the fog spreading
like frozen moonlight.
This house-gecko does not
understand Malayalam,
so I speak to my glass that
knows many languages.
It winks at me and tells me:
'Your time is not far'
I feel like flinging it down
and scream, 'Yours too',
But I restrain myself.
Instead like a beloved
I raise it to my lips, and intoxicated,
forget I am alone.

'Anand re...' Ulhas Kashalkar sings an *abhang*
in Bhairavi. Accompanied by the orchestra
of the future, assuring me that death happens
only in the present.

Pushing open the door I had locked from inside,
you and wind and rain rush in. You sit on my lap,
I play you like a *veena* in *yaman kalyan*.
Lightning or death can no more frighten me.
I will rise again and again in your love,
like the morning sun that reddens
that nameless flower below.

Marlon James's novel on my settee
opens by itself and the slain Bob Marley
descends its pages and sings: ' Rise up!
Stand up! Stand up for your rights!'

'Is it the right to love?', you ask. 'Yes,
That too is a right. And to sing. And dream.
Dreams have no constitution.'

I want to live. Until the earth is covered
with green feathers. Until that parrot sings
this time about Ravan who was
ready to die for his love.

I WALK INSIDE A CLOUD

(Shimla, July, 2016)

I walk inside a cloud
like the moon walks at times,
and at times, Michel Jackson.
The valley's breeze caresses me
like mother does at times
and at times, a banana leaf.
Red flowers glisten on the hilltop
like desire does at times
and at times Ashan(1)

I tread softly;
on the mountains, every stone is a goddess

While wondering if this violet flower
would turn pink if I name it 'love',
there appears before me :
a dancing blue waterfall.
'Leela'(2), she says, ' I am the eternal beloved'
'You are death', I say, 'a blue Menaka'.

She disappears into the mist with a scream;
only a light remains.

It is because I write in that dim light
that my poems become fireflies
with a dark present
and a bright future.

Now light may be.
That may be the beginning,
the genesis we always insisted
was not this , not this.

The story is yet to begin,
inside the cloud.

I am a Yaksha(3),
you won't understand my language.

Notes: (1) Kumaran Ashan, a great metaphysical rebel poet
of Kerala's renaissance (2) Leela, one of Ashan's famed female
protagonists(3) Yaksha is an otherworldly being.

MEDITATIONS: SHIMLA

(Shimla, September, 2016)

1. The Monologue of the Rock

Once I was in the Pacific:
among seahorses and coral reefs.
I was flung into the solitude of the shore
as the continents began to drift apart.
The secrets of the earth
lie engraved inside me, layer upon layer.

Wearing a flower I become goddess;
trampled upon, the outcaste woman.

When you sharpen your weapons
on me, I bleed.

I make no distinctions
between love and prayer.

I have in me the sea and the sky:
beginning, evolution, end.

This umbrella cannot
save you from my questions.

2. This Flower

I didn't know until yesterday
the colour of forgetting is violet.
And man's tendency to name everything
won't lead him anywhere.

3. Snow

I was the first-born.
I covered
all the languages.

Letters were revealed
as sunbeams melted me
They turned into trees and beasts,
thoughts and images.

I still stick to languages:
rendering them translucent.

(All poems translated from Malayalam by the poet)