

Poetry Series

Jagannath rao Adukuri
- poems -

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Jagannath rao Adukuri()

A Poem For The Slum Kids

A nerd bitten by the charity bug,
Spoke of slum children's education
And shining darkness in their eyes.
In the shanties, the water flows
Like a shadow in cloudy daylight
And smells bad to the kind rich.
My check glistens in the dark
Like a meteorite on a dark night
In the next moment it vanishes
In the depths of hunger and belly.
Other men have fat bank accounts
But are spiritual for soul-hunger.
Poetry sounds crassly out of place-
One would wish the black sewer
Is not talked about in prose as well.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

A Soul Change

In the river there was utter confusion
The boulders were not all that sure
And the hot brown sand felt disoriented.
They saw the Sunday bazaar on the banks
The images were there, those shadows
That played in the walls of the holes
Filled with darkness where was sand
That now removes fear of darkness elsewhere.
The shallow waters dealt with the bridge
On which people went up and down.
The grass swayed gently on the bed
When the wind called in the noon.
Everything was the same, even the buffalos
And their eyes were vacant as always.
The water was green and cool
Only the machines no longer whirred
And their men no more shouted in the wind.
The boulders wondered, everything the same,
Why only the water felt different this time.

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A Woman's Man

On the mother's knee, you got slapped
With alternate palms, warm with coal-fire.
Then the cradle went up by the mother's hand
You closed eyes to the world beyond cloth
Like you had done when you were in her.
Now a poetry- wet, gray-eyed thinker
You see the world is round and round
Like the little green tomato that grew
In the corner where the hairy tamarind
Shook its lengthy mane, sideways,
A home to eerie small town ghosts.
In the cradle you had swung and swung
When distinctions blurred in boy and girl.
Mothers and sisters preferred boy-girls
Of upbraided hair, with glistening oil.
Soon there were pretty wives-to be
Who would play hopscotch in squares
Or with toys with exaggerated mustaches,
Their pigtails decorated with flower.
The squares were unhoppable for child- feet
When you were a knickers-wearing male
And you were still a boy-girl for mama.
Now that mama is not around nor girl
Old boy, where is mama's overwhelming cloth
And the girls' squares for the hopping feet?

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Angry

The boy who tried to tease fate
Was actually not getting ahead
Anywhere, on his motor cycle,
For two seconds lead over bus
And bus got angry and life forces
Flowed in thin capillary network
In a five feet white clothed space
Looking behind blue opaqueness
It is then tubes, air and liquid
White robed men sitting in judgment.
We have seen it happening again
Not knowing why some days it is
Not the same sky and green patches
Liquid shadows and train hoots
Why unfeeling buses turn angry
And why denial starts down there
In the depths of knotted bowels
That hid nut shaped flesh machines
Pumping dirty liquids into the world.
All the time big buses get angry
Nut shaped machines deny service
Train hoots do not pierce silence
Everything is angry on some days.

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At The Memorial Forest For The Departed

We looked for her in a revived memory
In the greenness of the memorial forest.
A young mango tree flourishes for her
In the vast dome of the academy's sky.
The boy-keeper says it is fine and green-
One patch stands booked by the minister-
With hundreds of inscribed memorial stones.
He has already earned his wealth and power
Now he will try to perpetuate his memory.
At the corner the monkey-God is waiting
To be housed in a reddish-tinged temple
Along with the Goddess with extended tongue.
Here my mom shall flourish in good company
Soon there will be green mangoes hanging
Alongside the morning sun and silver rain
And tiny vivid birds heaving on its branches
Their bodies filled with sweetness and song.

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Black And White

These are unknown quantities;
they sit still in shadows and evenings.
sometimes they crouch expectantly
waiting to be reality-copied
they are huddled together
on the muddy shore of the lake
for boat and togetherness.
they are mere black and white.
my machine lumps them together
in one incandescent canvas.
they do not protest but sing
their music reaches my ears
in white fluorescence and still.
color blinds them in their eyes
they are basically black and white.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Cobwebs

The sleeping city I liked to call it
Actually it was neither sleeping nor city
Just that was in my afternoon brain,
Looking for some poetical excitement.
Yesterday's images continued to haunt-
The backpacking boy on the snow-land
Another girl on the internet, fully naked,
Clinging to the rock as though a bat
Returning in the evening to the cave.
It all seemed to add up to my world-
Poetry included monotone images as well.
It is these which are my colored copies.
My reality lay lurking in them all the time.
Just then a certain communist saw red
And vanished from the scene promptly.
His ashes will now be spread in rivers
Just like India's first Prime Minister's
In whirring defense helicopters for fame.
The fame was of course the doting son's-
It was his purple need from a hot brain
Fevered and full of fertile stories, stories
That made heroes in history-addled brains,
Stories that had sultry spies from enemies
Who indulged in highest skulduggery
And made hapless victims of patriotic Indians
Working closely with defense ministers.
When our father dies our country is with us
We go out briefly to receive condolences
On our cell phones in somber mood.
In the Sunderbans we protect hapless tigers
From fierce humans and other midnight predators
At the same time we protect innocent humans
From midnight prowling tigers in their huts
We are confused about this protection thing
We have therefore prepared a dissertation
Complete with power point presentation
On the Eco-preservation of the Sunderbans.
We have won laurels for our scholarship
We hope to clear our cobwebs soon.

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Connect

At the river bank the tree seemed
Totally unconnected with the spires
On the other shore and the stones
That sat in lonely company with
The human figure in red in them.
Where actually the connection existed
Was unclear after the camera click.
But now as I looked at the reality's copy
It all seemed to say the same thing
Being grossed up by the sky above.
Somehow in all this, my eye's camera
Seemed to have a say and my brain.
Actually my body sang the main song;
The tree and the stones and the water
And the spires fell in with the song.
The hooded figure sitting in the stones
Could be, me or the spires or the tree.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Copies

Poetry is hard to come by
For want of uninterrupted views
From inside my brain.
Words jingle but not the views.
At the window I see a tiny strip
Of the winter sky
And some passing shadows
Woman carries headload
Of red shiny bricks.
Not just one but three.
Not the bricks but the women
In white polyester sarees
A colorful copy I am in a hurry
To classify and file "save as"
I am in too much of a hurry
To make a play about it
With tall earthly creatures
As dramatis personae
Actually it sounds a bit foolish
To enlarge mere copies
For they only depixelate
The sky is lost irretrievably
And the trees lose greenness.
All the while I need their largeness
Their solidity and their greenness.
But the copies!

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Dust

We were thinking of large corporate profits
Euphoric with fevered rise in share prices
And growth rates of upwards of eight percent
The woman down there slapped wheat breads
To go with raw onion and slices of tomato
A thin streak of sunlight played with slapping palms
Another one with a pink salmon newspaper
That mentions no migrant women in canvas tents,
Slapping wheat breads before three-stone fires.
Their men are waiting for the contractors van
At the street corner to be picked up as a chance
The sun is going up at the corner, above the shops
Yesterday, some men were not picked up and today
Their eyes are focused on the dust raised by the van.

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End Of The Word.

The body struggles
Within the maze of words
No meaning comes forth
Only some guttural sounds.
Then comes the word's end.

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Faith

These flowers would not talk to us
About their previous night's growth pain
The pain of their petals unfolding
When the stars sprinkled dust on our roof
And the night's queen whitely bloomed.
All the while our pleasures stuck to us
There was déjà vu in the night's smell
The left over one of the previous day
That had mixed with tar and hot sun
Which had in turn mixed with bodies.
That night was hope and some angst
While nothing ever happened, it would.

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Fear

In the depths of the night
When the birds are sleeping
The whirring fan is my bird
My thought, my fear
The fan marks my fear
From the silence of the night.

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Forgetfulness

You and I make a fine pair, making
Noise in the depths of the night.
We clap in Golconda's golden silence
Across the wastes of history's fort
Actually our claps serve little purpose-
We are not calling out to anybody-
They just strike our unhearing ears
In unintended humour and droll.
Sometimes we light sticks of matches
At the upper end to hear their sound
Travel across thorny bushes, to the gate.
We laugh to remember to forget,
To forget other times, other spaces.
In this you and I shall jointly forget-
Forgetting jointly is more meaningful-
Above all the hole of forgetfulness
We make, shall be the biggest ever.

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Growing Old

I don't want to wear my oldness
Like a long robe dragging behind me
But as an under-shirt with holes like
Stars flickering on a moonless night.
They are in old man's thoughts, being
Covered by a thick polka dotted shirt.
The dots nearly hide all my holes
While they are filled with green envy
At others' lack of holes under shirts.
But I manage with these green holes
By a precise overlap of the beauty dots
With the green holes, their greenness
Always neatly sticking to my leather.
The dots make up for my loss of dignity.

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He Threw My Camera In The Well

this is a dark copy of the midnight's train
when my face opposed the overhanging steel roof
and images crowded like people, in the mind,
as the noisy train fan whirred pointlessly.
on the narrow berth there was a bellyful of dreams,
the dream-son who threw the camera in the well-
opposed to the son who would do no such things-
the very glass eye which captured a made up past
the white robed monks came from nowhere
they were not dream stuff, but real men
with real cloth bags full of worldly possessions
a woman with the hair mop of a daughter in her lap
my recent past is now made up with my camera
my remote past is made up with colored dreams
my camera I have now retrieved from the well

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Her Father And My Mother

the fat priest who had led her spirit over fire
ate blobs of sweetened jaggery-rice balls
as the sun burnt your back and the hairless head
First, amid loved rain and river sand
in the ancient temple, there is chariot-God
at night fear stalked between dream-you and you
when she who had born you called, strangely,
till tiny rest-till-peace pills saved you.

You then went into brown sculpture beauty
when the sun-shades played fun with art
You promptly returned with priest-chants
between two deaths there is a years space
her father entering time and your mother.
her ashes box snugly in a numbered locker
his met watery diffusion in distant river
our future deepened our past presently
and the past our parents were went into
numbered lockers and fast flowing rivers.

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Houses

All the while we want houses
That protect us from fierce tigers
From demons and midnight spirits
Drunk on smelly country liquor
Fed through special stone holes.
We make our gods feel spirited
And bribed enough to give houses
To us and they do not knock
At our midnight doors and scare
Our hair erect on our bodies.
Houses cost filthy money which
Our spirit friends alone can get us
In their unguarded moments
When we flatter and coax them
In chaste Sanskrit incantations
Via fat priests wearing ocher robes.
We love three bed room houses
With gleaming Chinese crockery
And objects d'art in drawing rooms
Of cement and concrete perfection.
Our hearts truly jump up and down
In the midst of much brick and mortar
When they enclose our inner follies
And our absurdly comic enactments.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Incense

The hum in the head does not say
Anything except deceased cells, fear
In the hair follicles, dust in the mind.
There is of course a song, then a picture
Loud and brave, beauty and history-
I hang my thoughts on the computer thing
The images there are larger than my life
And every one's life and river and water
Mountains and people dead and Sanskrit
Chants addressed to the dead, my people,
Who are no longer my people, except
Through the connectivity of a dark priest.
There are clay-pots of bones and boats
In the holy rivers and priest chanting.
We have thought of transience and rain
Rivers overflowing on the highways
Dismal failures and temporary successes
Then finally some beauty-talk in art
And literature, deep thoughts, mystery
And everything coming to an end
As though there was no beginning.
Yet the colors went on all the while
And they smelled nice like incense.

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Irony

There had got to be something
Beneath all this big movement
And umpteen noises in the vessels.
We thought deep-set irony was all-present
A smirk, a delicious wink, long strides
In green spaces towards empty buildings
As though it was all settled.
That was not. Even their irony lacked.
Absence did not matter. Nor being.
We smacked lips for nothing.

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Keeping Awake With Shiva

The night's wakefulness came across the starlit sky
Over the dark cluster of mangoes and the court wall
With loud cymbals and scraps of movie songs
After lanterns started flickering with halos of moths.
We then kept awake with Shiva over tea after tea.
The pigtailed girls had hungry stomachs
Yet made thin tea for for egotistical boys.
Their plea for holding bats fell on deaf ears
They then jumped over charcoal drawn squares
With their ribboned ponytails doing ding dong.
A mythological movie was then thought.
Mustachioed demon kings threw arrows in them
Which fought flaming maces and burning arrows
It was good which triumphed to our child's comfort
When we were still confused if that was indeed so.
At two we yawned deeply, convinced that
Shiva had by then consumed the deadly poison
And got back to his penance on the mount
The blue on his throat had by then vanished.

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Laugh

But better speak about sorrows
Of the flesh and the evil man
That existed in the bird's nest
Of one's cerebrum, littered
With child's feathers and twigs
When you are the evil man
And he is you, nestled safely there,
Waiting for a carcass of lost thing
A misery, a disease he preys on.
Behind the wall the sound had come
Of illogic and helplessness, in bed
And in the insecurity of the bathroom.
Then she laughed her eyes slanting
Your air was self-important, sure.
It was at life she was laughing.
Now at you, in crinkled eyes,
From behind the mask of unreality.

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My Ancestors

As we motored up the winding path
Our father told us tales of his ancestors
Who had climbed all their way to the peaks
Their spirits soared in the snowy heights,
But their shadows loomed in our thoughts.
His tales belonged to the hills and men
And it seemed that he had plucked them
From the hills and laid them before us.
Now, as my stories go, my father has joined
The ancestors as the last one in the line;
My voice echoes in the silence of the hills.

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My Spectacles

My spectacles are on the corner table;
There lay fine muslins and stitched textiles
Woven with delicate patterns, their craftsmen
Lived in mud-houses and their eyes failed
Their stomachs rumbled beneath those yarns.
A certain woman here is selling knickknacks
On the Kankariya lake front dying of plastics
The rim of the lake framed in orange dusk.
Her eye-contact touched a fellow-seller,
An old man in a monkey cap, nearby,
Who is weighing people for small money.
A young boy red in shirt persuasively offers
To clean the wax off accumulated years.
All the while women and children in color
Eat snacks distracted by a beauty- lake
Here I try to make poetry of broken images
Fine poetry and fine photography as well.
My spectacles are on the corner table
The old man is in his monkey cap, nearby,
His eye-contact touched the old woman
In the end, he made the photographer's story.

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Night

Now you are not the same as day things.
As though you are one among all those
Who form the viscous mass of night.
When you walk alone under the stars
The night bush exists separate from you,
Just a speck of black, for a while,
But soon you become the bush
Darkness drowns us all, bush, hills and sky
Except the hum of the sea-waves.

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Noontime Stories

trying to read stories
in the noontime, when
least rain is expected
there is a hot chimera
on the tarred road
a lone woman with a
metal pot on head
poetry strikes now
in the whir of the head,
a body posture replying.
the sky becomes hot
in the pipal leaves
pictures are now colored
thin and brilliant
like dreams of purple
when nothing happens.
all that happens in
the transience of the hem
in the corners of leaves.
the body posture replies,
the question posed
then the reply, in the body,
in the way it crouches
and in the colored back

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On Her First Death Anniversary

At four the morning was night.
A bird landed on the plastic sheet
Waking up too early for the worms
For the other birds' comfort on the tree.
The tube light whined sorrowfully
Against Octavio Paz and certain poet
In the inner tube of my computer.
Mother would come with rice balls
In Sanskrit incantations and dhoti
Tied across my waist and thread.
All we lay stretched on the floor
Remembering her dead a year ago.
Night will soon be morning birds
Their noisy calls were like that time
When she laughed the last time.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

On The River Bank

My figures are shadowy, squatting
On the river bank with halos intact.
They lost their identity, however
In the prevailing spatial situation.
They seem to be singing life's song
This little girl with a guava in hand
Waves the baton and the guava seller
Joins with her back to the audience
In the back there is a stream and rocks
Full of people who squat on the ridges
With their ears to the great music
That reverberates in the boat-song.
The song of life and of its ashes flowed
With the dreams of yesterday's phantoms
Played out in a priest's incantations.

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Our Childhood Home

We tried hard not to dream
While awake and in sleep
We leaned against the parapet
The shadows seemed to tease;
The sounds were unduly harsh
And the sights mere fragments.
Our dreams were a hotchpotch.
We could go back to then space
But surely not that time-space
The subtle corners were there
But not those soft shadows;
Everything was not the same.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Prayer

We do not like it here on the earth
Our eager hands rise from our hearts
Our feet beat music out of the earth
But these shadows keep playing with us
Our music cannot break through the sky
We play our goat-skinned drums feverishly
We produce our living music from death
Our prayer hall is full of holes in the roof
We see fine particles playing in their beams
When it rains droplets from the broken sky
Fall into extended palms disturbing prayers
We do not like it here on the earth.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

River Noise

river noise and river silence
swept by leaning trees and rocks
carry ashes of our living since dead
Our rice balls are carried in rapid waters
reaching distant rivers in hills
our fire is lighted, our rice cooked
for our no longer kin but airy spirits.
we chant strange words, sonorous
words that release airy nothings
from real bondages, strange.
words are airy nothings too
and the body is nothing, just sleeps
and it turns into ice and ashes,
swathed in ice that holds body
while it does not smell, quietly.
bodies that look at the sky
disappear the next morning
in ashes of flowing water.
we have tried to collect two urea bags
full of she who bore us into the world
the boat enters midstream
without looking back we hurl her.
her ribs were trying to hold
after the fire they are cinders.
we scoop her in our bags;
all the while we chant strange words
that mean nothing to us or to her.
our words are ashes, our love ashes
a bag of of yellowed bones.

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Sticky Notes

I keep writing my sticky notes
Small talk is all that takes place
Some black jokes, some witticisms
Rainbowy memories, bellyache
Somebody down there connects
Trying hard to make small talk
You talking about Mercedes Benz
A certain Chinese driver sleeping
In the basement over sated stomach
The fragrant harbour was not smelly
People with slit eyes made my world
There are now poets in the hall of fame
A certain Jussawalla is not my model
Do I look like Asterix, of course
Not in comic manner, sister says
Asterix is comically funny, absurdly
What happened to his pride of hair
We all hurt each other and ourselves
When tears stream down smoothly
Our helplessness breaks mask
Our images stream down like tears
Holding reflections of broken thoughts.
We are trying to break silence.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

That Day In Mumbai

My morning came back full of feisty crows
Fed on Mumbai garbages and fetid sea-fish
Of the harbor's heights, not the fragrant one
The day echoed with fallacies and lost moneys;
In all it was putrefaction and beauty in tatters.
The pixels were agitated by lack of sky spaces;
The roads were picture-perfect, with rocks flowing
And Haji Ali mysteries near the winding flyover.
The sounds of car horns meshed with crows' caws
Which were continually shrill and metallic as always.
Rukmini's lying-in hospital and juice beauty parlor
Nested quietly in the space above the footpath
The lying-in endlessly stretched into the windows
And piercing the blinds, broke into the summer sky.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Angel In Red Stole My Clothes

The angel in the red had taken my bag
My body arrived all in a piece as a guest
In the sky- land of a liquor comeuppance
As the red bird had flown low and high
It forgot my bag's existence in the universe
But brought this bag of bones with verse
And would, with an apologetic click, reverse.
My honor was surely at stake for the day
As it ended with everything red and dead
With not even clothes for this bag of bones.

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The Cherub In Inverted Spectacles

The portly gentleman looked at himself
In the bathroom mirror and smirked.
In the shrill voice of his childhood
He made some really funny noises
Which luckily merged in cistern sounds.
He tried to think simple like child
He will go out and pick some berries-
Bleeding berries from the red mountain
But mother says Banti it is sleep-time
Will you now lie on your back and sleep
How can one lie on one's back and sleep?
It is fun to wear spectacles upside down
The world looks so much different.
Not for me the complicated transactions
These grown-ups are terrible bores.
I will now dig deep in uncle's backyard
I will find several nuggets of gold there;
These teachers are sometimes stupid
They ask funny questions in their class.
The big gentleman looked at his paunch
This time the child is not coming back
Everything is once again complicated
The cherub in spectacles vanished
In the mists of time, not to come back.

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The Chomillah Palace In Hyderabad

The palace was luminously wet and reached out to sky
In its shadow lay the kings and their faceless women
Whose fine drapery interrupted their noses and seeing eyes
Under big-vaulting domes and resounding halls.
Their noises went up to the ceiling and returned empty
Like their noses and eyes lost from their faces.
They were not lost actually but had never been there.
When the silks arrived they forgot the women's faces.
The women sat there gossiping about other women,
Other women in the harem and their fine draperies.
Their men's bloated egos did not show on men's faces;
Their men's egos showed on the women's stomachs, ,
On the little heirs to the throne who came from there.
A fine bangle, a glittering necklace and some pearls
Hush talk about the latest addition to the harem
And other scraps of conversation went on as it rained.
They had no faces for the evening conversation,
Only bodies fully draped in the finest gilded silks.
In the beginning they sat on the ground huddled.
Later the West grew on them in the white man's land
And they sat on sofas and high backed chairs presiding
Tea ceremonies just like the sophisticated women.
They still did not have their noses on their faces.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Game

Thinking is so much chemical.
The nasty smell of death
Is in boat, earth-pot and river
It is all a game, my being
Your being and the sky-being
A simulation or something
Mother-love remains and not.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Govindgadh Lake

A moustachioed gentleman in military overalls
Takes us through coin drops of silver rain on the lake
A reluctant lake overwhelmed by ruined forts
And pleasure-seeking city slickers on yellow boats.
This very gentleman had broken brown bread then
On the lake-side with us and spread epicurean delights
His moustache properly twirled in royal pride.
Then the night was deep and dark and tongues of fire
Cast shadows which quickly climbed the mango trees.
There are many crocodiles under our feet, says he
As the rain lashes the lake in rising shrapnel
There it was the place where a girl had met watery end
The lake sat there brooding all the while, benign
And blameless, the crocodiles in its belly doing no harm
The mountains pour into it more and more water
Borrowed from the sky and but the lake repays it all,
In summer, when dark clouds go up from its bosom.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Last Lecture

In Randy Pausch's last lecture there is space
Left briefly only to be occupied all time-
The space that will exist all time, lacking
In substance like a quarry in the hillock,
Which exists as long as the hillock lasts.
Let us imagine the quarry hole filled with dark
And you stand on the rim of the hole that exists
In absence of space and presence of time.
As you continue to hit tangentially the last lecture
You do not get into the Randy Pausch's circle
The circle of an inspiring cancer death
The circle of dark quarry humor with a twist
You stand on the rim and lean into the dark
Straining eyes to see own reflection down there.

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The Lasting Silence

When your eyes go astray and balled
No thumping on the chest revives music
Distant listening and hair in a close mat
An electric shock here, needle piercing there
Does nothing to bring your world back.
There is a red liquid and words trail
There is then silence in place of rhythm
One wanted to bring the final logic in this
In the patternlessness and wild guesses
It did not exactly work and the silence lasted.

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The Making Of The Road

Hot were the words, mixed
With liquid tar and boys in the shade
Their eyelids closed and play-heavy
This man turned the drum of liquid
The fires crackled and black smoke
Went up above the tree and red wall
Smooth and black like a snake.

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The Manikarnika Ghat

These people have come here
To solve earthly existence problems
On the river that washed sins,
Human bodies and buffaloes.
They came from a far off river land
Where sins are equally washed.
But that is of course another thing.
They are wearing dark glasses
And their lungis above kneecaps.
They speak an ancient tongue
And eat mounds of liquid rice.
But that is, again, another thing.
But when their boat reaches
Within sight of the manikarnika ghat
They are deeply afraid in their eyes
Like you, me and our ancestors.

(Manikarnika ghat is the ghat (river steps) where one meets life and death: it is the cremation ghat on the Ganges in Varanasi. It is believed that the soul will attain liberation if the body is cremated here.)

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The Moon

This season our backyard coconuts
Hid it under their swinging fronds
Behind our asbestos-sheeted shack,
Its presence marked by the pale shadow
Of our cow swishing tail on the insects
In the backyard's lonely darkness.
The cow looked in the water trough
Giving out a low plaintive moan.
Her eyes shone through the night
As the rope of the pail seemed to move.
Actually it was a mere water snake
That had made the well its home.
Our hibiscus stood mute by the well;
Its flowers went gray by the moonlight.
Tiny flowers bloomed on the creeper
That had climbed our red-tiled roof.
Their fragrance filled the night air.
It was as though it was the moon
That smelled good in our backyard.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Other Person

Right now, in the room next, she seems to say something
At times as I lift my eyelids she appears in vision's periphery
As an incandescent presence in the diaphanous daylight.
At midnight I see a tiny lip movement as the train hoots
And in the wee hours when the cricket cries incessantly.
She does not speak to me in several dreams on my pillow
I know she is now in the other room, the far corner one.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Other Woman

Her white-washed house, on the town's edge,
Was warm and luminous in the evenings
Her window-shades hosted dancing phantoms.
The hibiscus tree in her backyard yielded
Deep dark red flowers meant for worship.
She complained of green snakes, now and then,
These green snakes, they do not harm.
Children played in the compound, collecting
Warm twigs for the ensuing festival bonfire
During the festival, colorfully caparisoned bulls
Came accompanied by frenzied drumbeats.
Love was truly a splendid thing
Behind closed doors and drawn curtains.
Colored bangles broke piercing her wrist
And the muscular elevation of his chest.
At dusk light cream-colored mosquito-nets
Hid shadows coalescing into each other.
Outside the window, the autumn leaves fell
One after the other, carpeting the garden floor.
The fat book on the table opened its mouth
With wide-eyed wonder at the trellis of shadows
On the marble floor cast by the chandeliers.
At night she burrowed her face in the pillow
As they dreamed together their joint dreams
And some times their separate dreams.
Green snakes haunted her dreams, slithering
All over her, dropping from the hibiscus
Of course they do not harm, these green snakes
But their slither-feel is so much disagreeable
And they merge so effortlessly in her shadows.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Peach Blossom That Talked

An intrepid dreamer brings
Several images in continuation
The flying water and the hills
Later the peach blossom
That has to move with the water.
The lights glistened forgetfully
Yesterday over fried potatoes
It was just a whiff of thought
These bones in the clay-pot.
The water looked yellow
Like what they said when
The Titanic drowned in voices.
The songs refused to speak-
It is the big bank on that side.
In the meantime I collect
All those pebbles on the beach
My pockets full, my heart jumps.
This winter will bring snow
On the higher Himalayan slopes
Folks continue their feasts
Waiting for village weddings.
I sit here without my wire
Entangled with ideas of beauty
On my imaginary pixels space
Dreaming of word constellations
That vanished quickly after.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Rain

The rain beat the lake, in rising shrapnel
A girl hid there under the rain shelter
In the eye – shadows of the afraid lover-
He that was afraid of the lens' blinding light.
The sun still refused to be coaxed out
Consequently there were no copies of beauty
The rain was now furiously beating the road
All through the evening the wind howled
And there was nothing that we could do
In this sort of rain nothing really happens.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Red Earth

Recovering body and thought
Alone in the back of the van
I watch driver's silhouette against
The mountain's red earth.
Body falls into red earth pit
I keep eyes shut and let
The fish-worms swim
Behind closed eyelids
Body shines in crackling glow.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Return Of Poetry

April disappeared in the hot afternoon
With idly floating tatters of clouds in the sky
And too much thinking, words, beauty-search;
When words failed thought gained ascendancy
Like those moonlit nights of singing girls.
We saw palaces with the hidden sun in chinks
Sad children dragging sacs of dung cakes
While buffaloes with glassy eyes sadly stared
Where was the beauty of the garden in arches;
Huge gateways hid them, in holiday mood,
From our touristy gaze and expectant lens
It is time poetry returned amidst dust and sun.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The River

The poet did not read much poetry
In the river which had water only once.
The river that had carried away
A pregnant woman carrying twins
The poets had still talked about its beauty
What if the river had just sand
And a few water-melon patches
Water-buffaloes soaking in the sun
Rocks that glistened on the river bed
White wet clothes drying on them
Without water the river is still a river.
It is hot on the sand under the bridge
We still talk about its pristine beauty
As though it is a river of water
It is not carved out of brown hot sand
Its reason for existence is not to supply
Truckloads of sand for buildings.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The River Confluence

On the river bed three holy rivers meet
Two of them are in the minds of people
The third is a streak of undammed water
The holy men and shop people celebrate
The confluence with drums and money jingle
Their minds meet with surprising cohesion
Aided by a loud-mouthed movie song
Holy fires are lit and naked bodies bathed
Head over water, palms cupped against sun
The holy men gyrate to prayer songs
Sung in kitschy styles of Mumbai pop,
Their bodies smeared with ash, hair in mat
The politician duly makes his touristy speech
There is everything at this holy confluence
Of religion, commerce and people politics
With only the collective conscious missing.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Sleeping City

It is here the royal dead live in the earth.
The royal palace had a tough queen, sitting
Under a calm canopy in the park outside
A certain Englishman greatly admires her
Clear-headed astuteness, on the stone,
The queen who had punished son, prince,
Under a trampling elephant, imperially.
Finally everybody sleeps in the afternoon,
Drowsy with day's sultry mundaneness
Why everyone sleeps the question is raised
The roadside vendor says what you can do
With so much shadow spread in the city
There is so much heat and so much shadow
The city sleeps: what can it do but sleep
There are dead men's halls everywhere
And drowsy sleep in our tired bodies
There was art in minds and culture and poetry
There is now commerce in the summer's heat
And dug up drainages and rolls of green wire
We wake up at dawn only to sleep in the day
Our poetry is in our opened up gutters
Our trade is in bloom on the sidewalks
Our shopping malls hide all our temples.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Squall Took Our Poetry

I had to write the poem when the sky was fresh
In the twilight the mystery deepened and frogs
Croaked when they came out for a while to die
The next day the frog carcasses squished under
Our morning- walking feet, while looking at the sun
The stories went on unendingly, the white clouds
And the blue sky, as the east reddened in the leaves.
I was to write this poem and there was still mystery
And the mind overflowed with the eyes shut.
Poetry was dead leaves that stirred under the breeze
When there was hardly breeze, nothing, nothing.
Later, in the day, the rakings of gossamer moth-wings
Could be seen glistening near the window-glass
The clay-gods in the human museum were laughing
Actually outside the village the gods protected our honor
Human history went on in a stream and conscious,
Our shared conscious, that is. Fear and fighting.
Love making in the cave on rainy days and fine
Drawings of our animal friends with large horns.
Poetry came in fits as the trees fell one by one
The lightning struck power and we went windless
The night's darkness had none of those liquid poems
The squall took all our wind and our lovely poems.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Temple In The Forest

Just when the temple bell rang
In the silence of the jungle amidst
Scattered temple pieces in the trees
There they stood beaming in faces
Tall and naked, their splendor
Not diminished by time's weight
Their stones do not saints make
But their unfading smiles do
We stand with our hands folded
Shrunk in our fully clothed bodies -
We who came looking for our sun
Found our sun will not set today
And our glass eye cannot capture him.

(The Jain temple in the Samasgarh jungles where we went to capture on our camera the most exquisite sunset of this season)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Wind

The wind blew in our direction, shadows played
It is the eyes that lacked the answers, in the contrast
At the eye of it all I knew my borders when the sun blazed
The morning sun went quickly, the noon would soon come
There was wind in the hair, my thoughts fell into the skin
When everything happened nothing actually occurred.
Up there the cosmic egg flickered beyond the trees
The blue emitted golden rays in the silky clouds there
As if I could collect all that in my past canvas bags.
Yesterday morning a little bird shrieked on the wire
My garden was full of them and under them, below the wires
Meanwhile the loops continued endlessly in my mind
While the summer season seemed to be undecided
When the monsoon would begin in the salt water and hills
And journey across the mountains and windy coconuts.
My words are silly giggling girls playing in the moon
Together they do not sing but hum like the pipal leaves
When the wind comes from across the the distant hills.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The Window

The window existed in the opacity of the wall
While blood flowed in the body, dizzy and moving
And words struck quickly, as in a morning breeze.
On the morning was the jazz music flowing freely
And as the music went, the pipal leaves danced
The breeze struck beauty in the sun's ambience
Shadows flowed in the tree's exquisite motions
The world danced, the tree danced, the wall danced
On the wall the elephant danced with his tail high
The kings of yesteryears rode on camels that laughed
On the opposite wall yesterday's man and woman
Joined in the life's chorus from across death's borders
Space merged with time, fragile images with solidity
Water flowed in the gardener's hose, silver and soft
With a flowing sound that smelled earth and water.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

The World Of The Alzheimer's Disease

All those are quintessentially
Protein specs floating freely
Our words float like protein
Fondly called lewy bodies
Colorless and unsubstantial
Dreams in shreds floating
As in amniotic fluid like then.

A certain woman of less virtue
Was not fit for our society
She embraced men in dark
In dreams and art and thought.
Fuzzy scenes of yesteryears
Telescoped into the present
Including ego and power games.

Let me know who is this professor
The man who brought it all up.
Our language loses meaning.
We do not agree you are you.
Actually you cease to be a son
A brother, a person, a human
You are a hand or a stone
Just a splinter for a whole.
My part becomes a whole
A thing is a word, an idea, an event
A daughter-in-law is a hand
A son a stone in the wilderness.

There is sorrow swirling in the belly
The anguish of a human existence
The pain in the bloated stomach
These forced feet take you nowhere
Men came with tails in their necks
Forcing down tiny white universes
When they go into the nether world
There is only a swirl in the belly
But no meaning accrues to words.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

There Is Something In Their Eyes

Those days they might have been
Pain in the butt
But now they are no more.
Nevertheless they were
Gentlemen while they lasted.
They are still gentlemen
In our vivid memories minus
The pain in the butt.
We now prefer to forget
Their paininthebuttness
Now that they are no more
And were gentlemen
While they lasted.
Their nomoreness has made it
Difficult to hold the past
Paininthebuttness against them.
Because when they lay stretched
In the white cloth under the sky
Their gaze told our future story.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

These Are No Images For Nest Making

When one tries to get back to the muse
One is steeped, like stick in the mud.
One keeps twittering like the night bird
Deeply afraid that the wind comes,
In the sea of night, bird does not see bird
But fallen leaves and broken twigs
And these are no images for nest making.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

This Guy Rilke: Words Are His Dreams

It was in dreams he broke vows of silence
And flew, full of love, into the blue sky
Like a colored balloon with a hanging fate.
In his dreams words quickly became things
And words again, as they were drawn out.
These words were actually woven dreams-
An exotic alphabet from strange regions
Their silver syllables shimmered from far.
He dreamt them as if they were the big dream.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Thoughts In A Shaved Head (On My Mother's Death)

While I was having my head shaved in her smoke
I asked why the hearse should have blown the siren
As we had gone about throwing flat rice on her silence;

she was alive, the van that took her
To draw a map of her brain's electrical wiring
Had blown no siren on the crowded roads.

Later, in my complicated cloth and ashes
I wondered why the river flowed in my mind and road
When there were no rains in the Vindhya hills beyond.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Trying To Make Poetry From A Joke

Afraid of the seething world within
I took pictures of my pulsing bagpipe
A white ghost with a tail in his neck
Watched the geometry of my heart
On the flatness of a luminous world
In this bath we are all naked and frothing
He with the cat's eyes had his own geometry
I co-swelled with him in creative pride
In our separate apostasies we fell prostrate.
Everything fell in place except this joke
As love's summers passed for wintry nights
The joke is now on me prostrate and falling
As I try to make pretty poetry out of it.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Visit To Orcha: A Visual Exploration

River and tree look on morning town
And on the bridge and men and women
With loads of firewood from the forest
A bare-bodied man has sun on face.
Off the bridge a wizened old man
With saffron cloth drying on river rocks
Bends exquisitely with age and beauty.
A woman in red bathes on the river bed.
In the distance is the bank and history's spires
On the bank a woman pours water in river
From a steel pot in oblation, to the sun.
As the sun glistens on the shaken river
River beats rocks in soft steady rhythm.
Men stand on the river frozen in time
Joyful women hide on the river's rim
Waiting to burst forth in celebration.
A holy man stands tall on the rocks
Drying a red loin cloth, his hair mat loose
A boy silhouette crouches near the holy man.
On the tall mound sits the crooked holy man
Against the brilliant morning sun, waiting
To be captured on somebody's digital lens.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

Women And City

actually time sleeps at night
while cities sleep in daytime
but their sleep gently touches
us in the evening as stale jasmines
remembered in time's sleep
their sleep is in opaque eyes
hidden in women's shadows
which get up and go after dusk.

Jagannath rao Adukuri