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Ramesh Shrestha
Abhi Subedi
Peter Karthak

A brown file
to Nirmal's
man with love

MANAS

A Collection of Poems

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25 May 1982
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Ramesh Shrestha

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✓ The Summer

I am a long naked slope of land
God of Rain, shower upon me
I want to be wet
and feel mud on my body.

God of cloud, wrap up my body
I want to sweat in the heavenly warmth.
God of Air, blow around me
leaves, fall upon me
I want to blush again.

In the first sunny morning of creation
I trample the cool green grass
grown on the muddy slope of the body
and hear the musical youth
surging through the lotus
grown in the lake of the body.

The cosmos dances again in the same old harmony.

God, go on showering upon me.

✓ **Rain in Kathmandu**

Rain drops on the roof,
a thud without any sound
no thresholds spurt
no leaves rustle
an' no morning dew there is on the petal.

Rain drops
without any sound of thunder
and any cloud hanging on the mountain.

No mist creeps in on the streets
nor any windows close to the breeze.

Here is dry rain
in a sunless hole

To My 23rd Year

22 years
marched out of the Ghantaghar
and walked gently into the evening
rough-shod into the morning
thru the hills
and the cities
Thru the clouds
and the suns

Now
hold on to time
and walk gently into the timeless
rough-shod into the Spaceless
thru the dreams
and the greens
the winter pines
and the summer vines

Sweet time stop softly
till I end this journey

✓ **Green—White**

The white on its furry haunches
Jumps forth in the bush
among smooth white pebbles,
all muscles, head raised,
darts its twinkling red eyes
to the green
all itching and sticky substance

The white takes a swift stride
and plunges into the rumpled trembling green
slipping, jumping, falling
and is lost in its own dance of fire and rain
now in its own green-white splendor.

[10]

✓ **Evening Thought**

A shaft of evening breeze
blows gently
gently heralding the Fall.
And at such moments I feel
I were home in the mountains
to tremble to the breeze
like the leaves
to the setting sun
and the rising stars.

[11]

Wakeful Kumbakarna

I hear no war
nor Rama's arrows passing thru.
No drums
no cymbals
no conch-shells
announcing war.

I see no war
no incense and no earthen lamps
no lighted candles nor any temples
no worship and no god
no warmth and no sweat.

I see no dreams streaming towards me rippling and
wrapping down the road.
I see no visions slouching towards me reaping and
wracking down the road.

No fire no flames
no lance nor the pierce
I do not see any bird hovering over our head
I do not see any thunder collecting over our hills.

[12]

'Thou art the dark butterfly
Thou art the green parrot with red eyes'

The mind becomes a green field
a long stretched hill of pine trees
a river flows down the feet.
I am lost in this blue haze
drinking in the calmness of the silence.

I pray and bless you
that your heart is a thousand petalled lotus
I pray and bless you
that your heart is a thousand songbirds
I pray and bless you
that your heart is a thousand petalled lotus
that your morning is a thousand songbirds.

[13]

The Sunset

The sun passe over
behind the twilights maple grove
like a leaf
falls off
and flutters into the twilight.

[14]

Easter Sunday 1975

The last flakes of snow
fall on to my eyes
and shine to the sun on the ground.
The last flakes of snow
fall in my eyes
and the sun draws a smile in the face.
The first breeze
Scatters the hanging cloud
and the clogged winter leaves.
Birds somersault on the branches
trees stretch out of their sleep
squirrels' tails shimmer in the light.

Now spring is here
and the winter left far behind.

[15]

Buffalo City

Sticking in its tail
the sign showing Niagra Falls,
the City of Buffalo
3/10 miles east of New York Turnpike
sits in a mire
wallowing like a water buffalo.

✓ New York Suburb

America grows small,
the big and beautiful,
like a lonely rose garden
owned by a dilettanti.
The Frostian walls
mended in steel
keep the aesthetes apart
and make them good neighbors.
I wake up with no visions
nor any dreams to remember or guess.

2nd Fall in Michigan

If life were river
after it is fall here again
dreams would all change colors

If life were time
it would be fall now
and there would be leaves under the feet

By the riverbed and timeside
I would then fall asleep
on the autumnal leaves all colorful in the water.

[18]

The Salem Witch

The waning black moon mews in firmament
seagulls hide their feeble necks into the sand.
The white cat shines forth in its silken coat
the elements give out an enveloping rainbow.
The golden broom shoots into the darkness forming
a milkyway.

The woman's eyes dazzle like a million stars in ecstasy.
The blue Atlantic suffers underneath, red flaming waves
and the mighty rocks turn into trembling pieces of sand.

The sky is as black as the sky is dark
and the blue moon shines through the eyes of a dark
cat that the sky and the night is
the Atlantic wakes up burning blue on the fingertips of
the woman
a magic spell is surely cast on the scene.

Leaves rustle to no breeze
branches fall off to no wind
and the dead rise and creep up into the restless sleep of
the living.

[19]

The Spectrum of Sex-Appeal

The end is not silence,
for it picks up the floatsams
and lifts up to look across the sea
as if to begin anew
the GLORY of life
all over again

Mississippi Moon

Like a beaten old Spartan
this moon, bepeled and benumbed
looks like a weary bespectacled busrider
waiting for the long bus ride to Memphis.

This is an electric moon in an electronic sky
A TEXACO MOON
shining above the golden arches of McDonnell Hamburgers
a fast piece of scenic beauty.

This here is a space moon of the space age

Shining up above the sky so high
like a salesman's prop in the sky.

Abhi Subedi

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A view from the optical house in Asan

A stream of humanity
a few baskets
two people stand and watch it
a lady with crow's feet looks at the new
model goggles on display
a few customers stand and look at the
woman picking up
her spilled basket contents
a bunch of bosomy girls in a monotonous uniform,
pass along giggling
float down through the crevices of life
gutters and sand beds
and difuse into the maze of life through time
vanish into the kitchens
Keshar Mahal corners beside typewriters
in beds with new Hong Kong sheets,
nearby a boy with long hair
measures a sweater against his body
a lady looks at herself in this small act of the man
her own wishes dramatised in the act
of the male person's taste
copious feet flash along the
small lane and scatter around the corners
stop, hesitate, tremble,

eyes throw shafts at each other
the society sleeps in the poverty of their looks
like a drunk convivialist supine in a lounge at a host's
a band of ritual ceremony passes along
in a chariot a Kumari with an obscure future
at the human level after the divine spell will be over,
gives small lurches with divine gaits
in another wooden chariot
a deity rests against a pillow
on his way to another god's place
after years of boredom in time and place
water is poured down from the window
on desperate human heads
east wind blows down a column of dust
a sudden drizzle
girls tie their saris round their tightly built bodies
a new batch arrives we begin to sort out faces
N, absently gazes in a vacant mood
a faint smile dances across his lips.
up and down
the eaves drop gentle water drops
folks drop by
drip drop drip drip.

[26]

As You Came In

As you came in
the room was littered with lost causes
fractured and worn thrills
scattered all over
storms that rose in a cup of tea
had torn the roofs of thoughts
myself that was torn asunder
entered the room with you hand-in-hand
by opening the gates of win and loose
head down and determined without my knowledge of
how it worked
you glided in
what determination you had
I never knew
your love-laden eyes were anachronism to me
I sat with you on the beds like lost battle fields
abandoned by our garrison
revisited with hosts of friends-
staring at us and sending the arrows of mixed thoughts.

[27]

Steve asked you to lift your head for a snap
you lifted your dear lamb-head
like the arm of the Ranipokhari clock-tower
crawling invisibly up but
surely marking the changed times,
the immensity of your love
the challenge to me to come into you
I just recall and
fly over the valley of my own being
now with you
can't imagine without you

[28]

Suicide at Ranipokhari

On my way to the British poets
I found people mocking at him
holding the mirror of death
upto their eyes;
He was lying by the blue water below
where he had chosen
to end his life the other day.
I questioned myself
was it a land-locked man's nostalgia
for sea ?

Anyway,
I felt he'd better not die that way
he made a mess of things by choosing it:
he was death
he was distraction
he had raked people over that corner
out of beds, colleges, Singh Durbar
and temples.

[29]

I felt he'd better choose
my way of walking
between poet Bhanubhakta's statue
and Ranipokhari
without ever disturbing
anybody's evenings.
Perhaps the living has own concerns
The correction of the deceased person's follies
is one

[30]

You and Them

The storm that rose in small room
is no longer a private phenomenon
it was a strange agony for you
a riddle
an interval, an interlude
you meet out of compassion
no body knew what you did
it was a holy decision, a candid and clean judgement,
your mind a twig dancing in a low breeze]
your conviction a clean moss
formed on the stony rock of your mind;
as she slid into your folds
you were an altruist, a really funny boy
that was the only time of your own;
it is no longer your own now
your private moments are others
yours conducts are judged on the tables
however much you may try to make it louder
they have overtaken it,
now the battle is on, you versus them-
you trying to disown it and
they imposing their wishful thinking on you
you have lived your life
now they have started theirs.

[31]

The Birth

Labu, says the calender,
is one year today
a daughter is born to N
today
his wife has a pain
every hour says
we are here to celebrate the births.

Peter comes late
groping his way through the darkness
and barges into the party
we are all born again
we drink to the new born's health
the nation and our apprehensions
take the shapes of children
children of our being
of our need to think
slowly phrases begin to break
accents are slurred
concreteness begins to give way
Peter breaks the form
he speaks one big letter
the letter has no icon
no shape
mind flows into sound

[32]

the music alarms a sweet lady
she gets up to go
again a process starts
process of new births
letters begin to crystalize
words come into shape
the colour of mind succumbs to the icon
the melody freezes into phrases
we drink again to the new-born's health.

Labu was born last year
TODAY
we are born every today.

[33]

Romanticism

Looking for the Romantic poets
we visited the bookstalls
moth-eaten and-dust infested volumes
we say the romantic age is over
still for academic interests we linger
I feel deep down a dead calm
before a romantic storm.

[34]

Statue in front of a Rana Palace

She stands outlined against
the dank sky
fully bare above the navel
and below the thighs.
Unzipping her wispy loin wear
she stares at a kid nearby
looking askance at her
with bracken twig in hand.

Hundreds of concubines were fucked everyday
along the ladder
over the green
across the tunnel
under the grooves
and round the water-supply.
The ruler, having subsided his passion,
would pout his mouth in her front
marvel at her wispy loin-wear
wished it unzipped
and stalked away
hating all concubines.

How angular are the dreams
of aristocracy I

[35]

The Mind

The mind falls suddenly
like a house of cards
from the steps of college buildings
I collect them piece-meal
and carry home
to make the structure again
with her help.

[36]

Pounding laundry

Pounding laundry on a rock
the washerman thinks of
his delivery promises
for the following day
he's pounding people's images
on the rock
hands dangling
chests shrunken
the dandism that the clothes would bring
lies wet on the turf
in a heap
seams are turned up
bodices lie bare in the open
an unknown man's trousers
lie across a girl's skirt
wedding trousseau
and a mourner's clothes
coalesce in the confusion
a new order is created out of the mess.

The clothes
like a planner's review chart
give a vague picture of men and women

[37]

in distortions
and illusions of shapes
the washerman scratches his thigh
and pauses over the pile of the laundry
and looks like a priest
attached still indifferent
like a planner lost into the
jungle of shapes of those
expecting a quick delivery.

The Baby Grows

She beams and opens
I enter
She shuts it back
and the tides of joy
float
and she talks of
how the baby grew today
by one word
one trick
one wink
and one laugh.

Ashram Singhwara

The Ashram is coming up
an atmosphere is coming up
it's a place
since atmosphere is to be localised
else it stays shapeless
everywhere are diffused places
but here a home is coming up
A meditator's room is to be put up upstairs
overlooking the river.
Saplings are to be brought down this coming spring
from higher altitudes, from colder climes.
You find this place
through complexes, inhibitions,
love and no love, I don't know, through so many things
I would look forward to this place in future
whenever I am strained
through too much flouting, too much drifting
or torn by the birds chirping outside

[40]

or dimples tired through grinning artificially long.
As for you,
when you come here
if the river, the chirping of birds
and the sound of deep silence
do chime with the Professor's own tidal ripples
with his smiling face,
and if you grasp the sonata
you may think
that the Ashram Singhwara has at long last come up.

[41]

A Hippie Woman

The suavity you wear
in your mauve clothes
is ours;
the red beads you wear,
the impression of your
equipoised buttocks' and bosom's
outlines over a sari and blouse
are ours;
the odds and ends you collect
are ours.
But the harmony and satisfaction
you derive from
the odd combinations
is yours.

[14]
[42]

Missing You Around the Old Pagodas

The massive architectures are there,
featuring the eternal love games
the raging emotions of love and hate
music frozen into contortions
two hippie girls with bleary eyes
sucking at the pipes
the unwinking eyes of the Budha
the jungle of deities
bound by custom they are worshipped with.

How to define your absence,
the warm touches you imparted on the cold deities
live in memory only !

The age-old pagodas sweat under the heat of poverty
and historicity mingled together
to miss you around this place
to think of your mind in these past times carved in stones
and to loose you in time and place
is like watching my distance with
the old dagodas
outlined against the dim coloured sky of the east.

[43]

Memory

I saw a funny creature today—in you,
it was producing a funny sound
waiting for some one to come and push it down
ride over it and gallop along
the old tracks in the forest left by its ancestors
in their first rage for living
chasing for union
to do a moment's justice to life
when the same creature in you clamoured for life
I stood perplexed
because I am paralysed by the typical human disease—
memory.

[44]

We

We lost our faces
became our own cartoons
we all looked like expectant mothers
on entering the memorial building
each one of us had a miscarriage of the expectations
Fiddling with the meat balls
on the lawn outside
we looked lustfully back
to our dreams
that were thrown into patterns
on the walls of
our uncertain careers.

[45]

Peter Karthak

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Asian Summer

Now,
With the Asian Summer gone by,
The pleasures of cold showers,
The smooth comfort of light clothes
Have gone too;

The earthy smell of sweat
From hairy ampits, from porous backs
From supple-tough thighs;
Gone too the tossings and turnings
Of semi-nude bodies in beds,
With their soaking wetness
Under mosquito nets,
With the monsoon rain outside.

And
The pervasive drone, hum
chatter of nocturnals
Must wait
For the April-May-June-July-August
Of next year.
Come Summer next year.

Asian Winter

Winter comes
Austere as a puritan,
Ambivalent as Everyman,
Cold as orthodoxy,
With a misty hazy clarity.

Winter,
The artist of concealment,
A draper
Shrouding animal humanity's
Movements, quivers, vibrations;
Bulges, protrusions,
And all sensualities
With thick warm
Socks, scarves, overcoats.

Covering all but a pair of eyes,
Therby leaving much to the imagination;
Bidding the seeds stay within the imposed warmth
From the reigning cold outside.

So, once again
Love-making is going to be difficult

[50]

In many an unheated bedroom
Of old Nepali houses.

Thus,
Reducing procreations,
Checking successions and continuity,
Winter puts a stop to all procedures
Except just one :

To nourish, revitalize, replenish
Our various faculties, our store
By increasing our appetites.

I only hope
My mother's not so poor
This coming Winter.

[51]

To Madhusudan Thakur
(Are you still like that, Guru ?)

You all-religion man,
Always with the prophecy :
"I see it coming !"
You uncertainly certain man,
Much-giving, receiving only a little,
Your long hair and beard barberwise economical,
Inviting strong gusts of wind !
You, living somewhere everywhere in Bihar,
Your fading purple shirt
Always looking for trouble,
Your canvas shoes all decent and practical,
You, internationally processed
But moulded and made in India,
For international use.

Rest a while, my youthful friend,
Watch the world go by
Before you prepare your next talk
What are you going to tell me next ?
"Insecurity is the price of freedom."
What now ?
That insecurity is your bliss
And that you were made for it ?

[52]

Well done, my friend,
To have diagnosed the world's malady !

I admire you because you are not me.
How could I be you ?
I couldn't even imagine
Or try to be you.
Try I would,
But what if I failed ?
Perhaps you would say :
"But we're always failing anyway, man !
So why stop trying ?"

So forgive me for failing you perhaps,
Would you ?

[53]

I am talking about Dogs, my Friends

Have you ever seen them walking, friends ?
They walk majestically, don't they, men ?
The way their legs carry them
To the dustbins and squatting
That's just amazingly graceful, isn't it, men ?

How they growl super loud and clear !
How they run and how they fight !
And how friendly they really are
To be called by men their best friends, eh !

Stoic bastards they are, you agree ?
Eating and yelping being just instinctive.
Not giving a damn about flies and fleas,
Scavengers extraordinary plenipotentiaryeahs !

But do you feel like I do, my friends ?-
When you see them stop their dignified walks
Right in the middle of the roads
And roll down on their hinds and sides
To scratch and lick their mistaken languidities ?

[54]

And how do you feel my friends, once more-
When you see them
In their helpless yearly entanglements ?

Do they look majestic then ?
Are they graceful even then
Huh, what do you say my friends ?

What ?
You say I'm actually talking
About Mad Dogs and Nepalimen ?

[55]

A Song on She by the Airport

She watches from her window
Of her house by the airport
Where the planes come and go
With mostly sadness, sometimes glow.

After tumbling in her anxieties
She marvels at the perfect landing
On a clear day with a blue sky.
She looks without blinking her eyes
At the graceful silver bird gliding by
Ah, with the Himalayas up behind!

When the planes touch the earth
She hears the wails of the sirens stop.
As each plane stops at its appointed place
Her voice is a sigh of relief and grace :
'Ah, the journey's end !
The Day is done !'

But partly,

That's why she cries as each plane leaves the tarmac
Cause every outbound flight makes her sad.

[56]

She doesn't know why
But the pregnant plane is taking away a piece of her heart.
Through her streaming eyes she looks on,
But by the time she quickly dries her tears
The plane is a tiny dot on the horizon.

Yet she sleeps peacefully
Cause the planes don't come and go at night.
But she doesn't know there will be a change,
And then she'll be by her window all the time
Listening to the sawing noises in the nights,
Blinding her eyes at the glaring lights.

She's not a cheeky girl but a meek lamb,
Her feet are limp and she can't walk;
That's why she likes to see people fly.

Yes, she still lives by that airport
But she'll not leave by the airport
Where the planes still come and go.

But maybe she's happy for one thing though :

She can't be married away from her widow
Of her house by the Kathmandu Airport
Where the planes still come and go,
When the planes will ever come and go.

[57]

Lonely Homecoming Fugue

Denuded, defoliated
You enter your room slowly, deliberately
And sit on the edge of the bed
Yes, right by the edge of your creaking bed
Exhaling just a sigh of disbelief.

Unscrew your right leg first
Yes, your right leg, slowly
(Damn this rule, but don't question it)
And your left leg after that
And

Throw them away to the corner-
That very corner-as usual.

Next job :
Slit open the zip of your chest,
Take out your liver, lungs, heart
And all the paraphernalia;
Hang them on the respective hooks
On the wall

[58]

Dismantle yourself further :
Take out your screws, nuts and bolts,
Bearings and filter elements,
Your hoses, nozzles and gaskets,
Your plates, bars and angles,
Your reams, beams and seams
And all the mother jazz rods.

Spread them on the table
Usually,
Systematically.

By now you feel sleepy
So, unscrew your head meticulously
From your neck;

Put that in the cabinet by your bed
All these being done

Now roll over on your bed
And shove your cock up your ass
And go to sleep soundly
Good Night !

What's so good about the night ?
Because your hands are still with you.

Shall I break them too ?

[59]

Despairless Abstractions on Addiction

My fingers start
Feeling the packet inside my pocket
To take out a stick of cigarette.

My lips clasp it
And my fingers get fumblingly busy
To strike a match-stick.

I don't know how long it takes
All the way
To puff off all the smokes
Of the "fag" down to its stub;
By how many contractions of the lips !
By how many inhalings of the lungs !
But where's the taste ?
And the exact feeling of gratification ?

Oh, when did I crush the stub
On the ash-tray ?

I don't know
Now I suddenly know
That my fingers are again itching
For the emptying packet
In my pocket
Without resistance.

From the mound of Kirtipur

Fame City
Thank you for the urge you gave me
To tread on your shoulder
That sunny, balmy, breezing afternoon
To gaze down your lap
At the terraced fields
Of golden rice stalks
Swaying in the breeze
This way and that way in unison
Defining the wind's path.

Ah, the stalks showing their green hems
Below their golden gowns
Oscillating and bowing
In rhythmic movements

Surely the music was golden too that day
Ah, that was the nicest ballet I ever saw
Making me sing with the breeze
And dance with the rice.

Dear Kirtipur,
You kindled a flame inside me that day
For that was a better education
Than the one catered by
The Castalia on your other lap.

El Solo Toro By The University Stadium

Oh, today again ?
Yes, I see it's there again.
The bull has not moved
From the very spot
For four days !
He's still standing there
Perhaps digesting the tall
Green 'Ganja' grass.
His mind orbiting
Above the omnibus of his head
Yet his legs rooted
To the ganja-ground
And most intent
In keeping the cows
Barren all around.

On A Clear Day (You Can See Moreover)

hospitalised mind
wake up with
streak of dawn
suddenly hearing
peacock wail
in garden nearby,
across green fields
institutionalised
eye of body
see
morning sunlight
on north-east hill.

oh ! breakfast come
at last.

Elvis R. I. P.

Where are you ?

Dear Fabian, Ricky Nelson,
Bobby Vee and Bobby Vinton,

Oh, Sandra Dee and Bobby Darin,

Jimmy Clayton and James Darin,

Cliff Richards, Tommy Steele,

Gene Vincent and Helen Shapiro,

Paul Anka, Sal Mineo and Annette Funicello...?

Where have gone your vaseline jars ?

And starched-up debutante frocks ?

Where are your pouted lips

And pajama-string ties ?

Where are your tapered pants--

Gone to the moths and ants ?

Where are your bobbysox--

Gone to the hound dogs ?

How's your marriage

And how's the fan letters--

Gone to the rocks ?

Do you still risk

For another Golden Disc ?

But tell me, oh, do tell me--

Where are you all at all ?--

Have you already retired in pieces

Since dear Elvis has Rested In Peace ??

Kathmandu Mardi Gras

Streaking freaked streets
Bells, belles and bulls
Chimes, rhymes and hymns
In rythmic tossings of
Potlets of white wine
Down your throat
Burning your system
Alleviate it with a chunk of spiced meat
Chilly, sour, sweet morassed molass.

Praise the Lord
And pass the goblet of white beer
Amidst the colourful deliberations
Musical motivations
Premeditation
On smorgasbord
After the throat is harsh
With chants
After the feet are tired
With dance.