

Poetry Series

**Prem Narayan Nath**  
**- poems -**

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# Prem Narayan Nath(28-07-1956)

# Carry Me On

Carry me on to the forest whose face is  
aglow in light.  
I put down golden words  
in the raptness of lovely green  
with pure conviction I see the reflection of every  
standing tree on wild streams

Carry me on to the forest with a  
moonlight-rinsed face, to the cootage of peace  
where every moment is enriched by sweet  
chirping of birds  
I place the footprints of murderous men  
on every humble tree

Carry me on to the depth of dense forests  
I plant one tall tree of love-laden heart  
on the flowing breast of every travelling river  
I tear off fruitless human blandishings

Carry me on to the eternal free forest,  
to the erect trees growing in a slope  
I look for pollens of every season in  
every tree which donot know how to stoop down  
I sculpture on every tree symbols of  
futile human pride

Carry me on.

Translated from the Assamese by Pradip Khataniar

Prem Narayan Nath

# Darling's Hand

From the finger with joints I have known  
The finger is of whose hand.  
From the gold ring have I known  
The ring is from whose hand.  
My beloved's hand  
Is it not my darling's hand  
It twinkles in the metal-mirrored moon-light  
That graces Phagun\*

Smelling of dreams  
Whose palm  
Draped with Keteki\*\*  
Whose gun-studded hand  
My dearest's hand  
Is it not my dearest heart's hand  
It twinkles in the metal-mirrored moon-light  
That graces Phagun

I have known from the intaken breath  
I have known from the outgoing breath  
Whose hand is this which sounds  
    the buffalo horn pipe  
In light have I known  
In dark Have I known  
Whose is this hand which plays the flute in moon light  
My dearest's hand, my darling's hand  
It must be my dearest heart  
It twinkles in the metal-mirrored moon light  
    that graces Phagun.

Translated by Ajit Barua

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Phagun= The eleventh month of the Assamese year,  
    roughly corresponding to 15 th Feb to 15 th March.

Keteki = Pandamus odoratissimus

Prem Narayan Nath

# Distance

When I was having a pain in my heart  
Unknowingly I started to turn page after page of  
the book of your face

my formless and light heart  
melted dropp by drop  
in each letter of the golden essence

painting flowers on eyes  
two coral beads of stars had  
spread out another sky

I bent down like a sun-dried flower  
in my reclining lips there were bustles of innumerable dreams  
they swayed back and forth  
I licked and tasted their intimate talents

I silently, cautiously  
kept a twig of a bright flower near you

You delve into the petals and closing  
your eyes you keep on inhaling the unattached smell  
Ah! what a chaste and intimate rhythm it has!

You are so far from me, yet effortlessly  
and unknowingly I cross this small river of distance  
how strange!

Prem Narayan Nath

# Evening Bells Toll In The Temple

Evening bells toll in the temple  
Birds flatter their wings  
the merchant sails off by a distant river

A child weeps  
graveyards become cool in the breeze  
crown of light falls down in darkness

On the palm sorrowful days clot  
the sky breaks down through  
the roof of dream

Domestic past settles down on  
eyelids at regular intervals of night  
fishes move up  
in silent watery green

There is the hum of raga gandhara  
in darkness  
time takes root through the river current  
the silent tree of breast revives

Flowing river, yellow waves  
water builds up the banks  
the lost boat of  
hunger, conflict and hesitation  
floats in.

Translated from the Assamese by Pradip Khataniar

Prem Narayan Nath

# How Are You All?

How are you all? enfolds  
the night and wraps the bird's call in sorrow

Flowers on my palm bend over  
and the disembodied crane  
starts peeking at heart

the rent sky dips in the sleepless eyes  
the hushed night reflects  
you, your face, your colour, your words

the earth is but an imperriled planet  
and no star pours rosy warmth  
on bonds of kindness / weal

a hive of storms brews at the tips of trees  
shedding leaves and flowers  
bares but stark poverty

How are you all, really?  
Time leans towards the battlefield  
man, machines and all-  
like the lone tree at an impending storm  
my riverine hut flutters

How are you?  
the lone question saddens  
the earth and sky  
rivers, seas and woods  
or countless human faces

in waterlogged darkness, stilled time, disembodied,  
the river of green eyes surges over  
But are you alright?

Translated by Pradip Acharjya



Prem Narayan Nath

# If I Keep On Telling It Will Be Daybreak

I change myself into certain events that issue forth  
from the depths of floating time  
plucking an undecomposed flower  
woven into the tapestry of my heart  
I stick it into thorns of a dream deer

From deep inner recesses life comes out  
as if the Sun has taken the wrong course  
Hopping and hopping like a sparrow  
as if a river has lost itself in a desert

A poison has dug its way  
to the depth of the bosom  
It is looking for life  
It is looking for a lost melody  
A forlorn listless soul  
The dancing Nataraj\*, playing light and shadow  
Severe indomitable beautiful terrible  
People have scattered in rhythmic concord

There is darkness alone  
People are creeping along in darkness  
Blood, flower and sweat are growing  
and taking root through darkness,  
Darkness is the rain of vacuity  
translucent endless thorny death

That night adorned with ornaments  
has remained traceless for many days  
The month of Aghoon\* is leaning against  
the clusters of milking rice

The water of the river is entering into pitchers  
accompanied by Bhatiyali\* songs  
So many days have passed  
Those fiendish festivals of darkness  
Those sleepless nights  
Who has forgotten the sorrow of living with outstretched hands?

The clouds moving onwards want to come back  
Priyambada, if I keep on telling it will be daybreak.  
The clouds as light as butterflies at the rosy evenings will turn to rain  
in your eyes.  
But better still let it remain as it is;  
let us put on the protective shields of  
quietness and remain silent  
all through the night.

Aghoon: the eighth month of Assamese calendar

Bhatiyali: an Assamese musical tune

Prem Narayan Nath

# If The Breeze Hums At The Arrival Of My Words

If the breeze hums at the arrival of my words to you  
suddenly sometimes  
stars of your eyes stay tuned  
Assume that the moon after the clouds  
was there yesterday and may be here today

If it darkens the tranquil dusk  
at the dazzling of my tears in your eyes  
It is for sure, I will dangle and mingle  
with the flowers at your doorstep

If it is late at the glittering of my letters  
in your skies  
I shout in ecstasy and agony  
like parrots like seagulls  
Assume that your message is already  
in my hands

If nostalgia blossoms in your gardens of spring  
the sky sways suddenly sometimes  
Assume that we will meet once again

If the streams touch your contours  
sounds emanate from silence  
It is for sure, the sun who flutes the sunshine  
was there yesterday and may be here today.

Prem Narayan Nath

# In The Markets Of Maibong

I searched so much  
for ornaments of raw gold  
in the markets of Maibong,  
Gold is only in name  
You are lovelier than gold  
without ornaments

The goldsmith could not make  
a single piece of ornament  
to your measure  
What kind of goldsmith is he  
without ornaments  
You are lovelier than gold

The door of the moon in the sky  
was open  
Secretly I peeped  
Orange moon  
People say  
The moon is lovely  
The moon is only in name  
You are lovelier than the moon.

Translated by Ajit Barua

Prem Narayan Nath

# Mustard Blossom

With whom did you come all the way  
as the yellow of mustard blossoms

does the drum beat in your bosom  
do you dip in your heart to paint?

does the river surge in your eyes  
or trickle down lean as sorrow?

Does spring fall  
fall the blossoming jasmine?

Does the lispig crane  
peck at your heart?

does your river overflow with love  
or purl quietly on?

Translated by Pradip Acharjya

Prem Narayan Nath

# One Day At Auschwitz

Summer descended  
The sky and earth  
Shifted from their places  
The smoke clamor darkened people  
One day at Auschwitz

None had ever come to weep after all  
The hot rocks turned into engravings  
By their weeping  
People's blood blackened on the petals  
One day at Auschwitz  
The dairy was penned with tears  
A page of black history  
God was shackled in the concentration camp

Time turned into a dungeon  
The country into a graveyard  
Tears blood wisdom were sentinels  
One day at Auschwitz

The bird forgot to sing upon trees  
The trees forgot to cause bloom in the fullness of spring  
The grasses forgot to smear themselves with green  
One day at Auschwitz

Savants stooped in shame  
Poets painters  
With wounds counteracts forever  
People grew dumb  
One day at Auschwitz

Prem Narayan Nath

# Pledged To Each Night Your Days

pledged to each night your days,  
your sundry drems, sodden  
range from rivers to changing skies

these still waters reek of dust  
or, alternatively, are fragrant

at home and abroad  
in inns and parks  
on buses or trains  
you dance away

Dance, and dancing  
shake off your body

You've taken off time to don speed  
shed flesh to wear blood

resplendent in melody  
yours is the realm of gold

lost in your dance, you are frenzied  
a runaway, unshackled

pledging your days to each night  
how long will you dance, you man of wings  
how long, the sun-bound one, will you dance?

Translated by Pradip Acharjya

Prem Narayan Nath



# Potato Eaters

An evening meal  
of roasted potatoes and tea

Green and yellow and blue smile  
joining together they have  
reached the sky  
On each hand a sunflower

A stern hour on the face  
A piercing love on the eyes

It has sucked up dropp by drop  
the stunningly beautiful night

Prem Narayan Nath

# Rebellion

Darkness trembled on the flute of the night  
sitting in darkness I wrote  
the dialogue of undigested sorrow

Conviction burnt in the eyes  
From the palate to the palm  
one after another mighty horses did race

Every flower of darkness  
burnt like lamps --  
lamps of blood-red roses

Darkness trembled in the flute  
of the night  
sitting in darkness I heard  
the flute of the heart.

Translated by Pradip Khataniar

Prem Narayan Nath

# Solitary Moments

Only the autumnal wail  
Only the swallow's thirst  
for moonbeams

Sometimes a tale  
Sometimes I hum a verse

Only in the heart  
a pale purple river  
deep and surging  
lean in times  
and sometimes in spate, raging

Only words  
love, non-love  
memory, forgetting  
the hours of waiting

Talk only of wings breaking  
only of being cursed

Only the autumnal wail  
solitary moments.

Translated by Pradip Acharjya

Prem Narayan Nath

# The Nude King

I have disclosed only before you, don't leak it out  
If the king comes to know, we've had it

The fact keeps flowing with people  
Walls bridges woods deserts so many

To whatever extent wherever it lies  
The incorporeal fact amid the winds  
The fact is about the king being nude  
His splendid look even without cloths

The people keep whispering about the face  
I've disclosed only before you,

Don't leak it out.

Prem Narayan Nath

# Through The Heart Of Kundil Town

Through the heart of Kundil town  
the blue river of the night  
all agog with ripples

Along the blue waves  
the boat drifts  
all agog

Scattered on the waves  
are thousand moons  
all excited

The cassia gold of woods  
the blue sky  
the moonlight with jingling anklets

Red Adam  
and reddish Eve  
the silent stars here and there

At whose lap does the river leave  
the nocturnal Kundil town  
coiling by it

No onlookers at a distance  
nobody has seen  
the yellow flowers of grass

Adam is hungry  
Eve is thirsty  
the moon pours down nectar

Adam is red in hunger  
Eve is reddish in thirst  
the earth floats upward  
the sky has thickened

The river of moonlight night  
is all agog

there is land under the currents.

Prem Narayan Nath

# Time Out Of Joint

The fishermen are coming  
Down the fields of ripening grain  
Hope clings on to the evening flowers  
below the eaves of their seeping roofs.

Sad and cheerless they leave their hunger behind  
tied to the grain  
the green, distressed and pale  
are shadowed by their dreams.

The naked, primordial host is coming  
the fisherman  
they do not leave history behind on the trail  
for you can still hear the fish they carry  
from the water sprinkled to keep them breathing

The fishermaen are making their way  
through the ripening corn fields  
golden, promising  
When the sky suddenly raged  
and then burnt out

throughout the dark, sooty day  
they searched, they fished  
stand on your toes to see them move  
the fishermen are returning from the lakes

Now, in the half-light of evening  
time, distressed, out of joint  
knits a net.

Translated by Pradip Acharya

Prem Narayan Nath

# Yesterday Is Where I Belonged

Yesterday was where I belonged to  
Yesterday I'd been in the ration shops queue  
Yesterday I was a pedestrian of the pavement  
yesterday I exchanged with many a mate  
    News reports of misfortune

Yesterday the night came drenched in rain  
Yesterday I thought I'd uproot  
the subterranean lands of darkness

Yesterday I saw thunder lightning  
clustered in clouds  
Yesterday thousands of springs settled  
On the unsullied bosom of flowers

Yesterday I saw the soothing charm of an innocent morn  
the afternoon's inertness after traversing the sun's adolescence  
The speechless evening a grave after the tumult

Yesterday I opened my wings  
after a melodic dream  
Yesterday my body was ablaze  
incessent burning of hunger  
flames blue and red

Yesterday a new day that came  
after cremating that sun  
merged into my age  
Yesterday I embraced as my own  
dreams brimming in my heart  
in tears brimming in my heart  
Yesterday I saw the evening inebriated  
Yesterday I saw the saliva of greed spilling out  
From the mouth of an old yellow toothed tiger  
Yesterday I saw rocks splitting  
From the body of a massive hill  
Yesterday the woes of existence flowed  
As a Ganges of the nether-world  
yesterday I hadn't any life in me to let the flow on



and now I languish on the cemetery by the Kolong

Prem Narayan Nath

# Your Heart And Mine

Your heart and mine  
Two halves of a pumpkin  
Let them be red forever

Your affection and mine  
Henna-hued  
Let it concealed under leaves forever

An endearing hen  
Yours and mine  
Let it lay golden eggs forever

Your words and mine  
Akin to reality  
Stay hot in the heat of blood forever

In your hands and mine  
Twenty silver coins  
We keep in the chest forever

Your hopes and mine  
Akin to the sky  
Countless pearls glitter forever

Translated by Krishna Dulal Barua

Prem Narayan Nath

# Your Last Repast

We entreat you to come  
And have your food  
Your last repast

Whether you be  
Light or darkness  
We call you shouting aloud  
At this dead of night

Your words just words  
Are kept in a cuddle in our tongues  
The eyes moisten with the dialect of tears

All others are at their places  
None have gone for alternations  
The alert stars have been witnesses  
Touching embracing this life and the next

The earth is your mother  
Whether you be  
Wind or silence  
Come and have your food  
Your last repast.

Translated by Krishna Dulal Barua

Prem Narayan Nath