

Classic Poetry Series

**Sachin Ketkar**  
**- poems -**

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## Sachin Ketkar(29 September 1972 -)

Sachin Ketkar is a Maharashtrian bilingual writer, translator and critic, based in Baroda, Gujarat.

Sachin Ketkar was selected by Marathi poet [Hemant Divate](http://www.poemhunter.com/hemant-divate/) for the November 2008 edition of PIW India, 'Poets on Poets'.

He has authored two collections of poems – one in Marathi and one in English – and has translated and edited an anthology of contemporary Marathi poetry, entitled Live Update. He has worked on translating fiction and poetry from Gujarati and Marathi into English. His translation projects have focused on the work of Gujarati short fiction writers, Nazir Mansuri and Mona Patrawala, as well as 15th-century Gujarati poet, Narsinh Mehta. He holds a doctorate in translation studies and works as a Reader in the Department of English at the MS University, Baroda. He is also a contributing editor for New Quest, a journal for participatory cultural enquiry in Mumbai.

He mostly translates fiction and poetry from Gujarati and Marathi into English. He has translated contemporary Gujarati short story writers like Nazir Mansuri and Mona Patrawala along with the Gujarati poets like Narsinh Mehta (15th century AD) into English. He also works as contributing editor for New Quest, a journal for participatory cultural inquiry, Mumbai. He holds a doctorate in translation studies and works as Reader in Dept. of English, The MS University of Baroda, Baroda.

Writes [Hemant Divate](http://www.poemhunter.com/hemant-divate/) on the poet of his choice:

"Sachin is one of the most unusual talents in contemporary Marathi poetry today . . . He can be very detached about himself, and at the same time, he reflects upon the world in an exceedingly personal way. This makes his poems paradoxically self-centred and other-centred. He usually writes about mundane and 'un-poetic' objects in an exceptionally imaginative way."

"He translates the everyday world into an outlandish and bizarre work of art. . . . He grapples with contemporary social and personal problems in a poetic way by using and abusing images from the technological sphere and the present-day metropolitan milieu: the world of internet and mobiles, multiplex theatres, shopping malls and photocopying shops."

[Divate](http://www.poemhunter.com/hemant-divate/)'s observations are clearly substantiated in the three Ketkar poems selected for this edition. While images of a fast-moving globalised world flow thick and fast, the poems seem essentially fuelled by a spirit of intellectual enquiry. A world of blogs and limited-over cricket matches rubs shoulders with a medieval world of myth and epic. Thus, in the poem about Jarasandha – the king of Magadha in the Mahabharata, who was memorably vanquished in combat by being torn apart lengthwise and thrown in opposite directions – the images seem primarily to be a means to probe cultural ironies and historical dislocations: "I order desi liquor / In the English wine shop. / In the desi shop/ It's the English liquor that I order." Torn between his native soil and the cyber café, between [T.S. Eliot](http://www.poemhunter.com/thomas-stearns-eliot/) and medieval Marathi saint poet, [Dnyaneshwar](http://www.poemhunter.com/sant-dnyaneshwar/), the poet parodies the postcolonial predicament in an extended literary conceit.

[Divate](http://www.poemhunter.com/hemant-divate/) concludes: "All this makes Sachin Ketkar's vision and style particularly idiosyncratic and original. He is also one of the best young translators and critics in Marathi today."

# A Foot-Note On An Unpublished Poem

I need no more  
those desert words  
those eroded rocks

for

Corpses of meanings  
hardly haunt the dark gray ruins  
of these lines

smell

These pungent words  
the echoes of the extinguished  
flames

touch

These lines as you touch  
your pregnant wife on  
her unrevealed treasure

Sachin Ketkar

# A Hymn

Wash us in splashing  
Spray of shower  
Dry us till we crackle  
Scorch us with brilliance

make us ancient as stones  
bless us with eternity  
so that we trudge our corpses  
like painful lumps of pork

give us your hunchback  
so that we remain  
like question marks  
on the page of existence

oil our helmets  
so that we glisten on our bikes  
kill us indiscriminately  
on these careless roads

Sachin Ketkar

# A Lamp

A halo of a lamp  
Disappears  
Voicelessly  
Into the timeless dark

We can no longer  
See our faces

I always hoped  
You'd feel the warmth  
And we'd  
Burn together  
As a flame

Sachin Ketkar

# A Long Song

My mouth is an old useless tunnel  
In which abandoned corroded railway tracks go in  
But don't come out.

You are the light at the end  
Of my mouth.

My face has turned brittle like a mummy's  
When I try to take it off  
It crumbles into million little pieces  
On the floor.

Let me undo my hands  
From my elbows  
And offer them to you  
In a dish full of oranges  
And grapes.

Allow me to make a garland  
Of my ten heads  
Interwoven with  
Sliced watermelons and pumpkins  
For your neck.

Permit me to take out funeral procession  
Of my brown eyes  
And bury them in the backyard  
Of your nipples.  
I will wait for marigolds  
To burst forth on their graves.

Sachin Ketkar

# A Note

Please  
Don't stand  
In the window  
Caressing  
Those flowers

The deep violet  
The purple  
And the tender  
Milk white petals

Linger  
And disturb  
The gray silence  
Of the evening

Sachin Ketkar



# A Paper Presented At The Conference On Global Warming

Invisible termite of the mind  
Spreads all over the computer screen in front of you  
The palms turn into the white mice  
And disappear into the holes  
In the bored skull of the God

The eyes dry like leaves, ablaze  
On the flat screen  
Of the liquid crystal sky  
An unknown cursor  
Waits for impotent letters to emerge

Green and yellow LPG attached auto-rickshaws  
108 numbered ambulances  
Cars without wheels  
Two wheelers without drivers  
The loitering Ashoka trees whistling  
With their hands in the pockets  
Run through my veins  
This multicoloured world has liquefied  
And it flows from god-knows-where places

The ghosts of traffic policemen  
Who have left their eyes at home  
Doing their rounds in dark glasses  
Pretend to be scarecrows  
Drivelling the tobacco  
Of female police officers

Sunlight, that old drudge,  
Fed up with people  
Fatigued from donkeywork  
Sits in the shade  
Wiping its sweat  
Bearing the weight  
Of this city on its back  
Hurtling profanities at the road

This world gets baked  
In the microwave oven  
It melts but look  
On the North Pole  
You can see  
The monstrous foreplay  
Of Bhima and Hidimba

And the whole city submerges  
In their foul-smelling sweat

Sachin Ketkar

# A Soliloquy Of A Smart-Alecky Soap

I,  
A one time fat green perfumed cake of soap  
Spend the rest of my life  
As a mere lucent film  
Indistinct from your toilet floor  
I toiled for you my whole life  
Wiped my skin against yours  
Wore myself out  
With my soul frothing at mouth

I am conversant  
With every root of your body hair  
I know your body more closely  
Than your partner does  
I am intimate with its every opening  
I know  
Every contour and every gap  
As back of my hand  
Its entire map stored in my memory.

I may not be strong enough  
To expel anyone from his caste  
I may just be a lowest of low garbage collector  
The most neglected of the neglected

I am sitting right here in your bathroom  
Pretending to be the floor  
Waiting for you to step on me

Sachin Ketkar

# A Soulful Song For The Black And White Television

Senility makes  
Blackout drift  
In front of your eyes

Discarded by all  
You sit in the corner  
Staring at the wall  
Your hunchback  
Turned towards the colourful world

Many tried their hands  
At breathing life  
Into your lifeless picture-tube  
But your eyes  
Deep set in the sockets  
Merely glimmered for a while  
And disappeared

You are only a black television now  
Awaiting final darkness

But don't you worry grandpa  
I am sitting just next to you  
Like a Celeron 133 computer  
Opening only ninety-five windows of my mind  
Awaiting for obsolesce  
To set on me sooner  
Than on you

Sachin Ketkar

# All This Fuss About Skin

1)

To tell you the truth  
I am infuriated  
By all this fuss  
About this wench, this skin

To begin with  
How she beckons us  
With her half-open  
Moist mirage lips

Only to meddle  
Between you and me

2)

Not for nothing  
Do they call her  
The biggest organ  
Of our body

The bitch keeps  
The maximum supply of the blood  
For herself

As if that's not enough  
She maintains the exact record  
Of every passing year

3)

The thing that we call Man  
After all is nothing but the skin  
Because what we see  
With the skin called our eye  
Is nothing but skin  
What they call clothes  
Is nothing but artificial skin

That we use  
When we come short of the natural one

4)

One always suspects  
The thing that we call the World or whatever  
Is anything but the loose wrinkled hide  
Of the old man called God

After He gives up his ghost  
We will graze his hide  
Make pretty purses  
And handbags  
For our women

5)

Skin me  
Make chappals  
From my leather  
Trample me  
Underfoot

Because from now onwards  
I am going to wear my body  
Inside out like a shirt

So that now you can observe  
The skeleton turned out  
The dangling intestines  
The spleen, the kidneys  
The stomach, the liver  
And most importantly  
Concealed just behind my lungs  
The boring exhausted  
Booster pump.

Sachin Ketkar

# Alta Mira

Line drawings of naked fertility goddesses  
On the walls of a dirty train lavatory

An arrow points at the hole  
Between the thighs  
Put your prick here  
Goes the anonymous message

I take my cursor on the hole  
Finding my way through the fleshy layers

And click

There opens the dark cave of Alta Mira

The cave from which we have never come out

I rub stone  
Against stone  
Light the bonfire of dried leaves  
Illuminating  
Stories of mammoth-hunting  
The fertile women  
With huge breasts and broad thighs  
My story or my picture

Doesn't feature in these stories  
I only play the role of shadow  
In this never ending Darwinian drama

On the walls of the clogged lavatory of my mind  
I mouse-click the link for Alta Mira  
Only to read  
The tiresome message  
Page not found action cancelled  
In the public lavatory

A prehistoric rock inscription reads  
Sheela is a whore

Carved by some primate

In a college urinal  
The Onida Satan  
Has carved for us  
With a huge mammoth tusk  
An oedipal message

Neighbour's envy  
Owner's pride

Sachin Ketkar



# Bird Songs

The song birds swim  
The dark green depths  
Of my soul

They flock  
On the long forgotten branches  
Of underwater trees  
Intoning  
Their deep blue songs for you.

My arsenic heart  
Disintegrates  
Under the ancient gaze  
Of the cold-blooded sun.

My destiny  
Dries up like a goggling injury  
Revealing the cobalt bone.

The birdsongs are orphaned  
And my blood  
Black with rust  
Weep on my helpless fingers

I weep salt  
As there is no water left  
In my tears.

Sachin Ketkar

# Campus Poems

I)

In silence the faded pink domes  
Share loneliness  
With the evening gray and sad  
Darkening walls  
The dismal trees  
Long for someone from ages

II)

Everyone's left  
Classrooms brood  
Over their emptiness

Shrubs cling to the red bricks  
Like memories

Some solitary figure  
Is seen on the abandoned streets

III)

These old walls  
Will always stare blank  
At their dim reflections  
Within me

IV)

At night  
Silence sleeps in a corner  
Like a cast out street dog  
In a discarded night

IV)

Somewhere  
Sleepless boys

Near a hostel tea-stall  
Chant songs  
To the night

V)

Silence is empty  
The old darkness  
Is back again

Sachin Ketkar

# Chlorophyll Of Poetry

Icy green blood  
From the carnage of multitudinous  
Trees, innocuous and mute  
On my bare naked hands

Whenever with my sharp pen nib  
I lacerate  
The white backs  
Of a blank sheet of paper  
I calligraph cold-blooded lines  
Of tongueless poems  
On the cemeteries of voided spaces  
Vacated by annihilating  
Thousands of forests

Unsuspectingly  
My hands become part of the conspiracy  
Denuding this planet  
I too become a collaborator  
In this felony

But my lush green hands  
Cloaked in the bleeding screams  
Of the handicapped trees  
Are long-familiar  
With the yellow grief  
Of a leaf nipped off

The crimson excruciating pain  
Of a crushed petal

The wet sting of a branch being broken  
The earthy agony  
Of being uprooted

These are the very things  
Flowing out on the white corpses  
In the form of chlorophyll  
Of poetry

Sachin Ketkar

# Every Breath That Leaves My Body

Every breath that leave my body  
Is an encrypted confidential message  
Only death can unscramble.  
It is useless to hack it.  
Death is the only ultimate interpretation  
There no text remains.

Paper boats leave  
The abandoned dock of my being  
Sailing soundlessly  
On the invisible rivers  
Of my ancient breath.

Traces I will leave behind  
Are crumbs fallen inadvertently  
From the absent minded mouth  
Of death.  
Let harmless sparrows peck  
At the grains of my words.

I will not leak the secret  
Once I am gone.

Sachin Ketkar

# Excerpts From Jarasandha's Blog

(i)

When Bhima seized me by my legs  
In his merciless iron clutches  
I thought he was going to dispatch me  
He ripped me in half instead  
From head to toe  
Like Dante did to the Prophet  
In his Inferno.  
He simply tore me in two.

It was on the advice  
Of that Dark Charlatan  
That Bhima flung my two halves  
In opposite directions  
So that they would never ever  
Be one again.

He is the one responsible  
For my demerger

The Pandavas' sala  
That Ranchod

(ii)

The two halves of my being  
The two halves that would never unite  
Are still very much alive  
Pulsating with life  
Because someone daily reminds me  
That I am already dead

(iii)

I am lying just like that  
In Hell's cheap hospital  
The left half of my body  
On my right

The right side of my body  
On my left  
The left side on my right side  
The right on my left  
My left ball on my right side  
The right ball on my left  
The left half of my brain  
On my right  
The right half of my brain  
On my left

This is the reason why  
Perhaps  
I speak the language of the Right  
With those on the Left  
The language of the Left  
With those on the Right

My left right language  
Converge from opposite directions  
Uttering the interminable throbbing dialect  
Of suffering

Some people prefer  
To call it poetry or something

(iv)

Bhima tossed away  
One half of my soul  
Into the fields  
The other tumbled  
Into a cyber café

Eliot's ghost haunts  
One part of my being  
The other one intones  
The Anubhavamruta

(v)

I don't have one undivided tongue



I have two half tongues instead

My Gujarati tongue craves  
The touch of Marathi  
My Marathi tongue pines  
For Gujarati

(vi)

I order desi liquor  
In the English wine shop  
In the desi shop  
It's the English liquor that I order

(vii)

In fact  
Ardhanarishwar  
And Narsimha are my forefathers  
But they are imaginary  
I am real

(viii)

Look, this is my map

One half of my body is saffron  
The other is green  
Both facing away from each other

There is a historical white strip  
Of the Partition  
Which cements my both parts

There is also a sham  
Of a heart  
With twenty-four spokes  
Defunct  
But very much alive

(ix)

In fact, I wanted to go to heaven  
In the flesh  
One half of my body  
Did actually manage to go there  
But the other half  
Missed the flight

(x)

Frequently  
The halved organs from one half of my body  
Arrange a limited overs cricket match  
With the organs of the other half

Obviously  
My soul plays the umpire

Look, here is an appeal  
For run out  
I signal  
For the third umpire

(xi)

Only in you  
Is this Jarasandha  
Complete

So take me deep down  
Forever  
Conclusively end  
My two separate lives  
My two separate deaths

Sachin Ketkar

# Hairfall And Photocopies

You will chance upon  
The secret black and white codes  
Of my being  
Lying anywhere

In the bedroom, or the kitchen or in the lavatory  
In the classroom, in the train compartment  
Between the keys of a keyboard  
On the mouse-pad  
In the staffroom, in the caves on the moon  
In the snake hole  
In our house, in their house  
In his house, in her house  
In my home, in your home  
In the gaps between the words  
Among the pages of a book  
That makes you scratch your head  
Anywhere just anywhere

Obviously I know  
Where this road leads  
But don't forget  
That in my every hair  
Is my DNA

Or whatever

After thousands of years  
In some rocks  
A scientist will discover  
My fossilised hair

He can generate  
Yet more photocopies of me.

Sachin Ketkar

# History

Today in these shattered ruins  
We'll hear the pale dithyrambs  
Of the vanished bards  
Reverberate for the vampire bats  
Emaciated by history

Today in these scattered edicts  
We'll gaze at the silence  
Of the bleeding scripts which conceal  
Terrified eyes  
Mouths left agape

Today in these pillars of victory  
We'll touch the rock silence  
Of the devastated women  
Watching with ruined eyes the space  
Evacuated by history

Today in these empty spaces and ellipses  
We'll inject our own absences  
And silences to resurrect  
The tragic chorus  
Of history

Sachin Ketkar

# How To Write A Poem

To write a poem  
Is a trick  
We all can learn

We simply have to let  
Those black invisible fingers  
From Beyond  
Take over our imperiled fortifications

For poetry is invasion  
From skies  
From the unlit bowels of the earth

As you turn syntax  
In your fingers it turns

The shadow puppet of our self  
Between its fingertips

Sachin Ketkar

# Inscapes From Hostel

I)

in the empty corridors  
the locks  
hang  
like testicles  
of an old man

II)

sooty faces  
of the crumbling walls  
mosaiced  
with pink nudes  
watch the congestion  
of a cigaretted room

III)

the damp smelly underwear  
almost cleaned  
hang like  
lifeless bats  
on a swinging wire

IV)

who knows  
you may even begin to like  
the vapors of urine  
near the fetid dirtied lavatory

Sachin Ketkar

# Love Songs For Amogh

I

Torment of thirty five worlds  
Falls away  
With your smile

A resplendent star  
In the evening  
Of my hazel eyes

You have fathered me, Amogh  
Before I die

II

I haven't come across yet  
Love poems from fathers to their sons  
Probably  
It is not manly enough  
To write a one  
But here I am  
Looking at the blank paper  
In front of me

Remembering  
The paper white purity  
Of your skin  
When the nurse placed you  
In my hands for the first time

Your first dark faeces  
When I changed your diapers the first time  
Injecting cow's milk  
From a needless syringe  
Into your mouth  
I remember your ceaseless howling  
On the second night  
When your mother had not started lactating

Do father lactate?

They may  
For they are females too

This poem for instance  
Oozes out of the nib  
Instead of my nipple.

### III

I absolutely had no idea  
My elf  
That all along  
You were hiding  
In some obscure corner of my mind  
Playing your usual peek a boo

Though I could feel  
That you probably reached out  
With your palm  
When I tried to hear  
Your somersaults  
And flying kicks  
Inside your mom

I remember  
How you wetted  
My umpteenth pajama  
When I used to rock you on my laps  
Sitting cross legged  
(Yes, you could fit into the frame then)  
During midnight hours

I also remember trying to put you asleep  
On my shoulders  
When you were bent on staying awake  
With your mischief

Yes, fathering a father  
Can be a tough job  
But you did it pretty well.

### IV



I don't know exactly why  
We decided to name you `Amogh`

Your name means the infallible one  
An unfailing weapon

But I know now  
That I aimed my arrow  
At my aging agony

It hasn't really missed its mark.

V

I have hardly anything on me  
To pass on to you  
With joy

The books I read  
Are as dark as the ones I write

My genetic records  
Are not commendable either

They haven't isolated  
The Asthma gene yet

Probably  
It has latched itself on to you

Neither do I think that they can ever identify

The gene for poetry  
Which is probably as bad  
Or even worse

For it means  
To be condemned forever

To live alone  
Like a man with an extra pair

Of testicles  
Hiding his shame  
In the shadows of the world

VI

In these hands  
I have held the ovaries  
Of my aged mother  
Floating in a flask  
Where seeds of suffering were first sown

I have seen my wife  
Writhing and bleeding in her labors

I have seen eyeballs  
Of my friends father  
Who was quite fond of me  
Extracted and bottled  
For posterity

I have been overrun  
By asthma  
In the Oxford Botanical Gardens  
Where I thoughtlessly went  
And spent rest of the evening  
Floating in warm water of the bath tub  
As if in amniotic fluid  
Thousands of kilometers away from home

I have sat up wheezing  
Any number of nights  
From past two and half decades  
Clutching the stubborn old darkness  
Under my belly  
For support

I have seen family friends  
Swindle my father of his hard earned money

I have cremated dozens of old skulls  
And heard them crack in their pyres

I have seen madness of love  
In the woman's eyes  
I know the feeling of oneness  
When I make love to her

But it is so different  
From the feeling of love I have  
When you sleep in my arms  
Dreaming of innocence  
I kiss your small white shoulders  
Feel the fragrance of your fingers

laying with my ear lobes

Agreed  
I haven't seen much of life  
But I haven't been entirely ignorant of death  
But to catch a glimpse of love  
And to be touched  
By the beauty of the whole world  
Is sufficient  
To make a prematurely graying man  
Without youth or childhood  
Smile

VII

Amogh, for you  
I have attempted the impossible  
-writing a poem on happiness

But who cares if I fail  
As long as your paradisaal beauty  
Lights up  
The fading lamps of my eyes

Sachin Ketkar

# Stranded

On a murky corrupted afternoon  
As the harsh rains hurt  
The sparrow wings of time  
Hiding in the tired wet boughs of an unknown tree  
Or in the gloomy unmanned windows  
With its intolerable soaked translucency  
I m stranded  
In a small grocery shop, without an umbrella  
Unable to go to my dank dark house  
Or return to the dark edge of memory  
Where I came from  
I wish the rain would stop breathing  
I wish its heart would die a brain death  
I hear it flogging mercilessly  
With its silver black whip  
I have a reverie of a black-and-blue world  
Running for cover

I hear the disquieting reminiscence  
Of an alluring voice dripping wet  
From a distant branch calling out to me  
I at times wish it would rain on me someday  
Leave me stranded  
Between the betweens of the world  
I at times see in my trance  
My ancient sarcophagus  
In your eyes  
I dream of my stranded tomb  
Between the moist love  
Of your tender breasts  
I see my parched fingers thirst  
To touch your mad eyelashes  
Soaked to the skin  
In the heavy sterile rains  
Of my tropical rain forest desire.  
Stranded in the terrible blank space  
between  
the agonized craving for silken darkness beyond oblivion  
and the anguished craving for ripe secrets of your mouth

I stand helplessly waiting for rains  
to flood my gutters and streets

Sachin Ketkar

# Ten Asides For Ten Heads

i)

The elixir of immortality  
In the navel  
Of this ten faced world  
Has dried out

I place my elongated diabolical fingers  
On the navel  
And click  
But I hear no beep

Its ten thousand windows  
Must have crashed  
I guess

ii)

You think Ravana was a single person  
Or that his world had a single face  
Let me point out for your information  
His bliss was also ten-faced  
His agony was ten-faced too  
He used to laugh  
In ten different ways  
At a single joke  
He used to weep  
His single grief  
In ten different ways

iii)

Go and tell your one-headed Rama  
To do whatever he liked in his life  
But never try his hand  
At poetry

Leave such things  
To people like us

And drown himself  
In that one-headed Sharayu

iv)

I have seen this world  
Ten times more than you have  
I have perceived clearly  
With my twenty eyes  
How all things have ten sides

Pray tell me then  
How can I shed light  
On my ten-headed world  
With your one-headed language?

How can I express  
What I feel about Sita?  
How can I explain  
What I felt  
When they humiliated my sister?

My mother tongue  
Has ten grammatical numbers

How will I write poetry  
In your language  
Which has only two?

v)

Valmiki must have managed somehow  
To write the flat one-headed story  
Of Rama's life

But kindly assign  
The job of writing  
My authorized biography  
To Vyasa

And appoint ten Ganeshas

As his stenographer  
For composing this Maha-Lanka

vi)

Your three stepped syllogism  
Is useless  
When it comes to understanding me

The seven-stepped logic  
Of the Jainas  
Is equally futile

Discover first  
A ten part syllogism  
Invent first a language  
With ten grammatical numbers for me

Bury your mono-directional  
Monotonous language first

Toss away the formula  
Of the Rama nama chant  
And recognize me  
As the true Deity of your heart

Because  
With my single head  
I can watch ten different channels  
At a time on the TV

At a time  
I can browse  
At least ten different brands in the mall

I can chat at least  
With ten different people  
At a time

I can discuss twenty different topics  
With twenty different people  
With my twenty cell phones



On my twenty ears

vii)

Welcome, folks to my palace  
Look at my well furnished bathroom  
But I hope you won't be so stupid  
As to ask me why  
There are ten mirrors here  
Or ten tooth brushes  
Or mouth fresheners of ten different flavours  
Or ten tongue cleaners here

My soul is dual-core  
Multi-tasking is my very nature

viii)

My mother had only two breasts  
Women unfortunately just have two  
That's the reason why  
I need either  
Ten women at a time  
Or a single complete woman  
With ten hands and ten breasts

However, I feel Lord Shambhunath  
Has benevolently obliged womankind  
By not creating such women

Had he made such a woman  
We would have committed  
Atrocities on her ten times over

Indeed  
Even if men have a single organ  
Their hunger is of ten different kinds  
Their thirst has ten faces  
Conversant as I am  
With these things  
In my old age  
I am planning to write

For the ten-headed men  
A different Kamsutra with ten sutras

Book your copy today  
And get a prepublication discount  
On my autographed copy

Ten conditions, of course  
Apply.

ix)

You must have realized by now  
That this glossy resplendent world  
Is my empire

My close circuit cameras  
Watch over all ten directions

I have detailed information  
About what you do  
Or do not do  
In the mall

This world is my circular prison  
All of you are my unknowing prisoners  
My innumerable cameras  
Keep a close watch  
Over your every move  
Over infinitesimal vibration of your thought  
If you do anything out of the way  
Mind you  
You will have to face me

x)

However,  
Only I know my true tragedy

Your one-headed Rama  
Could never fathom my secret  
His puritan Brahmastra

Could never find its way to my navel  
As he never knew  
Where it was

My heart has sprouted ten heads too  
I sit and cry  
In the ten-headed darkness

This Sharayu of yours  
Is made of my ten types of tears  
I have cried  
Till my heart has turned schizophrenic

You alone can find my navel  
And free me of my ten souls  
Or else in the end  
I will have to commit  
Postmodern Harakiri myself

Sachin Ketkar

# The City Which Doesn'T Go Anywhere

(For Surat)

A city in the middle  
Of a flourishing obese market

A convoluted net  
Of shortcuts and flyovers  
Trammeling the babies of the sun

Here refuse piles up even on the sun.

Even the sun's daughter is reduced  
To a mere gutter.

Leptospirosis has infected the human gaze itself

A sack of plague-spreading rats  
Thrives in the voracious bellies.

Here the line that separates  
The homes from the shops is pretty unclear  
You can't really tell where a shop ends  
Where a home begins  
Or where a home ends and the shop begins.

Here the statues of various leaders  
Point in various directions.

Surat, however, doesn't go anywhere  
It merely sits  
Amid the deafening discordant concert of horns  
Clouds of toxic smoke  
With garish red lipstick  
Waiting  
For one or two more customers  
Even after all the customers have left.

[Translated by poet himself]



# The Dildopnishad

I don't have a body  
I am the body  
I don't have a soul  
I am the soul  
I am the Ultimate Self  
Of all the orifices of your flesh  
Of all the hollows of your soul

I am the Secular Shiva Lingam  
Who gives Sat Chid and Anandam  
To all the openings of your bodies  
Who fills up the vacuum of flesh to brim

Multiply me with the void of the body  
What you get is the void  
Divide me with the void of your body  
And the void again is what you get

I m masculinity without manhood  
I am the Purusha without Prakriti

I am Yama, Niyama, Aasan, Pranayaam, Pratyahaar  
I am Dhyaan, Dhaarna and Samadhi  
I am Dharma, Artha, Kaam and Moksha  
I am Sat, Dwaapar, Treta and Kali  
I am Brahman, Vaishya, Kshatriya  
A menial servant of your orifices  
A pleasurable Shudra  
I am the Yogi  
Who gratifies the hungers of your holes

Hence, treat me fondly  
And I too will fondle you in all the right places

Allow me to penetrate  
The depth of your soul  
And get the first preview  
Of the first and the last Freedom



# The Hunt

I have hunted for the black antelopes  
stags and musk deers  
in the remote corners of my dark continent  
forest people with nightmare trees  
bogs and silences of the devoured animals  
for I wanted to bring you  
luminescent deer skins sunlit eyes of the wild cats  
and my own head trophied and stuffed

With my primitive wooden spear  
I have fished for the fish fleshy and fat  
in ambiguous swamps coves and marshes  
as I wanted to bring you  
bittersweet blood of the freshwater fishes  
to moisten the deserts of your lips

I have hunted for the snow white polar bears and lazy seals  
in the wilderness of my ice age heart  
I wanted to bring you the silken furs  
to keep your milkwhite breasts warm with love

I wanted to hunt the dark shadows  
of the nameless predators prowling silently  
in the haunted tropical forests of your eyes  
and lay their dead skins and time worn bones  
at your feet

I have hunted for you  
in the labyrinthine streets of this haunted place  
for I wanted to bring you  
your ethereal reflection secretly concealed  
behind the long dark lashes

of my eyes

Sachin Ketkar



# The Isle Of Calibans

Welcome once more  
To this isle of calibans  
Strangers with magic wands

Ariels  
You released once  
But left us calibans  
Chained behind

This is the hole where we live  
We of very ancient and fishlike smell

After you had left  
Ariels and the rest of hermaphrodites  
Whipped your language  
Into our hides

Descendents of Miranda cackle  
With imported lipsticks  
And imported smiles  
Under the canopies of Ray Ban  
Don't they have very Aryan wiles

See us from the Rajdhani  
As we shit near the tracks  
See us oozing  
From the imperial cracks

Welcome to our slums  
And gladly hawk your brilliant wares  
We've nothing to barter  
But these ancient famished stares

Sachin Ketkar

# The Old Prostitute At The Taj Mahal

She reclines against the unfeeling marble  
Of this exquisite abandoned hospital  
Wearing a startling red lipstick  
On her aged black lips  
With a hope  
That her flesh made light  
By termites  
Will be of some use  
For minds turned horny  
Under the influence  
Of the emperor's grand white delusion  
Of catastrophic proportions

An ageless river  
Reeking with effluents  
Rotten myths  
And polythene  
Waits for that dark silken flute-player to return  
And restore her youth, grace and innocence  
As they say he once did  
To an old hag in the story

There is an empress buried here too

She died during childbirth I learn  
Trying to give birth to her fourteenth child

These women must have realized by now  
That the flute-player in question  
Is not exactly famous  
For keeping promises

Sachin Ketkar

# The Simplicity Of My Congenital Thirst

The pale fingers grow  
Like hair  
On the edge of my amnesiac  
Skin reaching out  
To the dried skeleton  
of sky

The simplicity of my congenital thirst  
Branches out of my pores  
Shedding  
Its eyeless brown leaves  
On the famine  
Of my earth's black mouth

The parched sky peels off  
Like a cheap blue paint

The decrepit arteries  
Of the desiccated soil  
Crumble like the ruined drainages  
Of the extinct civilizations.

My stultified heart is a palm  
Whose fingers have come off  
But it can still hold nothingness  
Like Shiva's translucent semen  
It can still keep count  
Of my deaths with its mute thumb.

I have planted  
The stillborn foetuses  
Of my eyes  
Near the ancient roots of peepal  
The male rocky hands  
Of the last earthquake  
Will awaken  
Their disfigured faces

They can still startle you

By sprouting from unlikely places

Sachin Ketkar

# The Tom And Jerry Show

We don't have that much time  
When I m scuttling around  
You trap my tail in your paw  
If I happen to pounce upon you  
You vanish in your hole

Is it going to be like this  
Till all our machines conk out  
Till all our factories die out  
Till all our mechanical parts  
Corrode and crumble?

And after all  
Even if they submerge our ashes  
In different rivers  
Aren't our mortal remains  
Going to be intermixed  
In the ocean anyway?  
But does this mean  
We are going to test  
Each other like this forever?

There will be no passion left  
In our embrace  
No lust in our loins.  
Isn't it a high time  
We turned off this Cartoon Network  
And called it a day?

Sachin Ketkar

# The Tree Of Total Eclipse

(Godhra carnage and the subsequent riots in Gujarat)

We are never really sure  
How long we will have to live  
Under the cyanide shade  
Of the sky-high banyan tree of total eclipse  
Growing in our backyard

No one dares to unravel the mystery  
Of its source, spread and increase

After all,  
We ourselves have nourished it  
With manure of smashed infant skulls  
We have never looked at it  
With the eyes  
Of the tattered weeping vulvas.

Under it  
The dreadful stench of incinerated skin  
Spreads  
We,  
Inveterate orthodox onlookers flee,  
Plugging our noses

We will never get  
To the root of it  
Because  
While digging  
We will find instead  
Its arsenic aerial-roots

Deep within us

Sachin Ketkar

# This Summer Too

This summer too  
When the thick solar winds go wild  
On the desert streets  
Houses blaze like tungsten  
In the bulb  
The dust storm sings  
The retina

Or when  
The radioactive stars crown  
Above the head as Gemini couple  
And the Bee Hive thirst for honey

My self  
Like a parched leaf  
Shall burn  
At the focal point  
Under the blinding glare  
Of existence

Sachin Ketkar

# Tithal

Sea is nothing but  
Slabs layers of water  
Trying to overturn ride each other's backs  
Whimper near your feet  
Like a mongrel

Seashore is nothing

Here old men come to smoke their dull bruises  
Young couples to show they are romantic  
Boys come to ogle  
Girls to giggle

There is nothing in the sky  
And sky is nothing  
It is an inert  
A dumb blanket  
Staring down like  
Centuries upon us

Sachin Ketkar



# Wait For Me

Like dried teak leaves  
My eyes have come off

Bored crows people  
The forsaken branches  
Of my leafless fingers

The sun has dropped  
His smooth round skull somewhere  
On my treeless grounds

I am waiting to grow  
into a great babul tree  
In this wasteland  
Where no sun grows on the trees

Blown by the barrenness of the winds  
My eyes gather near your feet

Crows look at you  
As if you are unwanted stranger.

Somewhere a monkey stares at you  
And you do not know.

In the crowded thorny shrubs in my lungs  
Hangs a no-moon night  
For  
In the shifting sands of life  
I have buried all my twelve moons.

My thousand eyes  
Dry like leaves gathered around your feet  
Blaze like the intestines of a deadpan earth

The bored crows  
Fly away into the soul  
Of white inert sky.

The smooth round skull  
Of the sun crumbles into dust  
I am waiting to die

Like this huge leafless baobab  
On which the monkeys wait  
For the fruit and a leaf

Dust gathers on the tired tamarind tree  
That has forgotten its own taste.

Dust gathers  
On the brown soil of my eyes  
Dust gathers  
On the round abandoned skulls of the sun.

Monkeys look emptily at the shadows  
Of the crows which are no longer there.

Gather the ashes of my eyes in your palms.  
Weep the tears blue as the earth  
On the silence of my pyre

Remember me as monkeys  
Remember the fruits  
When they are hungry  
As the crows remember their mates  
In summer. Remember me  
As the leafless baobab  
Flourishing on the tombs  
Of the entombed moon  
Remember the rich green felicity of their leaves.  
Wait for me  
Where no one waits for anyone any longer

Sachin Ketkar