

Poetry Series

Suman Pokhrel
- poems -

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Suman Pokhrel(September 21,1967)

Born on the 21st September 1967, Suman Pokhrel is a poet, lyricist, playwright, translator & artist.

Suman Pokhrel is only writer to receive SAARC Literary Award twice. He received this award in 2013 and 2015 for his own poetry and his contributions to poetry and art in general in the South Asian region.

Early life

Suman Pokhrel was born on September 21,1967, in Mills Area, Biratnagar, to Mukunda Prasad Pokhrel and Bhakta Devi Pokhrel.

Suman Pokhrel attended Bal Mandir, a government owned Kindergarten in Biratnagar, until he was five. Pokhrel got moved to his ancestral village of Kachide in Dhankuta at the age of seven and raised there by his paternal grandmother. His grandfather Bidhyanath Pokhrel was a poet and a politician. He was introduced to literature early through the influence of his grandfather's library, filled with Nepali, Hindi and classic Sanskrit literature. At the age of twelve, he moved back to Biratnagar to live with his parents. Pokhrel was mentored by his father, who was an engineer by profession and a bibliophile with a keen interest in art and literature.

Career

Suman Pokhrel joined the Nepali civil service in Nepal Government as a Section Officer in February 1995. He left the job and joined Plan International in December 1998 as a development activist and went to the remote hilly region of the country. The job demanded visits to the more remote areas of the region.

A multilingual poet, Pokhrel has written in English, Hindi and Urdu beside in his mother tongue Nepali; and have them published across the countries. Many of his works have been translated into other languages by various translators including himself.

Suman Pokhrel's poems in English are appeared in different international poetry journals and anthologies including Snow Jewel; Life & Legends The Songs We Share; Sweet and Sour Dreams; Global Poetry, Learning & Creativity; Grey Sparrow; Prachya Review; California Quarterly; Asian Signature;] and in different volumes of Beyond Borders, South Asia; and Art of Being Human, Canada.

Most of English translations of his poems has been rendered by Abhi Subedi. Some are translated by himself. Some other are translated by Mukul Dahal, Manu Manjil and other translators.

Beside into English, Suman Pokhrel's poems are translated into Bengali, French, German,] Hindi, Italian, Persian, and Spanish; and are published well as in print journals from different locations.

Pokhrel has read his poems for some international audiences. He has read his poems in SAARC Festivals of Literature in 2009,2010,2011,2013 and 2015. He read his poem in SAARC Charter Day Celebrations on December 8,2013 in New Delhi, India as an especial invitee. He recited his poems in Nepali during a monthly two-poet poetry recital program in Kathmandu in March 2015. He read his poems at All India Poets' Meet in Orissa, India in February 2016 as an especial invitee poet from foreign country.

Many of contemporary South Asian writers have quoted Suman Pokhrel's poems in their write-ups; and has regarded him as one of the most important creative voices of South Asia.

As a translator, Pokhrel has translated poems of several poets from around the world into Nepali and many of Nepali language poets' works into English, Hindi and Urdu.

Writings

Suman Pokhrel is described as a poet with a strong tender voice critics say his poem 'Children' creates tenderness in the mind. It is indescribable the way the poet has drawn out the innocence of children metaphorically with Nature. The rhetoric question at the end leaves an indelible mark in the minds of the reader. Where as in his poem 'You Are, as You Are', he exudes humility in expressing love. The importance of love quotient in one's life is spelled in this poem, a simple submission almost in the form of a ritual. There is an abundance of sublime purity in his expression of love

One of Suman Pokhrel's most quoted poems, 'Every Morning' emphatically declares the uncertainty of existence. It comes as a rude shock that how casually we take everything for granted. In a world which is filled with a plethora of violence, tragedy and devaluation of life the poet seeks gratitude for his being. His poem 'Every Morning' is like a gentle reminder to mankind.

His poem 'The Taj Mahal and My Love', is an innovative poem. The epitome of love creates awe in the mind of one and all, falls short to a lover who wants to give it all in this lifetime and not be delusional like Shah Jahan. The poet has

penned down the poem with reverence to the greatness of the Taj Mahal.

(Taken from English Wikipedia)

A Story Of The Setting Sun And The Moon

The road comes from somewhere
And goes straight somewhere else
Caring not the Chautari* that awaits him,
Goes past, leaving her
Where she is.

Nothing different happens elsewhere, too
The same it is in every single age.

Not a single road ever
Has gone off,
Chautari walking on its side.

The road kept coming
And continued going somewhere
Alone - a stranger.

Chautari kept awaiting
Looking far,
Crying
And wiping her eyes in silence
As a forlorn village
In the deserted plain.

Never could the road
Be the guest of Chautari's love
Nor could she follow
The footmards of the going.

This evening, too
The sun had to tell the same story
Before he went away,
Leaving the forlorn moon
hankering after his light.

Translated from Nepali by Manu Manjil.

Charutari - a roadside rest place

Suman Pokhrel

Among Freed Bonded-Labourers•

I could not say
which one was more authentic,
their fate or
the slender woody sticks
that supported their shacks.

I didn't understand
which one was more unclad
and which one more ruinous
the hated history
they chucked on the ground
or the shameless present
that mocks their fate.

I was surprised
when their free tongues
bolstered by self-esteems
were resonating around us
creating ripples of smiles
across their faces
like deep contentment.

Friends were asking
'what will you do if it rains?
'maybe we will get wet'
was their reply.
'what will you eat later? '
they had no reply to offer
save the selfsame smiles.

I felt I was getting enraged
and losing my speech
like them losing their dreams.

I felt like slapping on those faces
smiling for good fortunes
that they never saw,
and for laughing
even in misery.

Like a rainbow arching with a splash
like a rain falling in needles
like sun drifting away by stealth
without touching the country sky
I felt like crying
to see them jesting
with their own dreams.

I was feeling like mad
by the melody of birds
singing out of tune
in the settlements
where travels lose
their own destinations,
zest of butterflies dancing
unaware of their fates,
and the dumb wind
blowing with no fine taste.

I felt I would die
to see that hollowness
born by defeating humiliations;
they were cheerful
as if they had conquered the world.

Life's mystery continued to trouble me
a question came to my mind,
is freedom dearer than life?
or does it become easier to live
when life becomes difficult?
□

(Translated from Nepali by Abhi Subedi)

Suman Pokhrel

An Encounter With Life

Life was running, running
after a mirage-like desires. I met
him, by chance, resting for a night on
a bank of Time. observed him like a
seer does. pinched to awaken.

I asked why I was cast aside. asked
why he carried along my dreams but chose
to escape me. I asked why he
longed to be a porter of my dreams
and walk the roads not taken.

Still enveloped in a blanket of dreams
he continued to lie still, pretended
as if he was in a deep slumber.

So I poured out my suggestions:
don't try to tread and walk on Sun-rays
don't try to carry a storm in the arms
don't try to smile, while drinking
from a burning chalice
don't try to sleep on a bed of snow
don't try to embrace water _ _ _

He got to his feet with a sudden jerk,
collected his blanket
and then darted away in such a great haste
that till this date, I've not seen him again.

(Translated from Nepali by Manu Manjil)

Suman Pokhrel

Before Buddha's Statue In The Rain

Crowds
frozen and surging
in the middle of the street
in holiday moods
forgetting all the backlogs and files.

People-people and umbrellas
umbrellas-umbrellas and people.

These heads sheltered by umbrellas
be they of Zeb-un-Nisa, or Catherine
of Cleopatra or Fenichka
live with their own stories.

If it were not so
a little Thames could be mixed
with the Bagmati water,
a little Nile could be flown into Pikhuwa stream,
why say then Buddha never carried gun?
he didn't play piano,
we do not know of him
making pictures either.

Let us be honest
we have praised Angulimala
will make no difference
if you convey my salute to Amrapali.

This moment
I am keener on the stories of valour
washed away by this year's monsoon floods
than the abstract shapes
glued to myths, history and stories.

When this flood blocks the road
I am worried more
by my soil getting washed,
than by getting late
to reach my destination.

I fear that the floods
might flatten this hill
grips me now.

- -

(Translated from Nepali by Abhi Subedi)

Suman Pokhrel

Before Switching Off Light

Hushed dark
Feeling walls
With hands of winds
Is groping its passage
Into the house.

Light
Jumping out of window
Is staring the dark
From afar.

Stuck in indecisions,
Though emboldened
By intense desires,
I am imbalanced
This time
I'm overflowing, and
Staring vacantly
Grappling these very drowsy eyes.

As if unaware of
This disquiet
Caused by love's intensity
Should I complete this poem
Or should I put
My room's light out?

☐

☐

(Translated from Nepali by Abhi Subedi)

Suman Pokhrel

Before Taking Decisions

In how many minds
Should I go crazy?
Whom should I ask?

Should I continue to hop
Like drops
That jump up
After water
Flowing from spout
Hits the ground,
Or remain transfixed
Like stone under the selfsame spout
That despite being lashed
By incessant flow
Does not even budge?

Which eyes should I look for
To find the ultimate
Unseasoned answer?
Or
Should I ask everyone the question
That should not have been asked?
Or Should I
Turning up to the sky
Be answering the question
That's not been asked?

In this atmosphere
Where you have to go
Perennially crazy
Only to survive,
Which auspicious moment
Should I choose to become mad?

I didn't ask any head
Like core of lapsi* fruit
Hiding no seed inside,
Didn't ask for auspicious moment
To a judgement like leaves of taanki** tree.

Dew drop as always
Was reveling all night with flower
Taking taste of alcohol,
Naked morning sun-ray too
Was making worship
After diving in the river.

That effervescence
Finished after a short while
Like cotton fleece ultimately
Turning into cloud.

Without asking anybody's advice
I turned myself insane
Sitting under the same sun
And the same clouds.

I believed all along
One day
Everyone would go mad
Just to see me sane.
□

* Nepali hog plum of the mountainous region.

** A common Nepali fodder tree.

□

(Translated from Nepali by Abhi Subedi)

Suman Pokhrel

Between Rainbow And Melody

As you entered the room
stirring air with suppleness of walk
waking up the stillness with jingles of cymbals
making curtains dance to the sound of bangles
aroma wafted into air from canvas and copybooks
my paintbrush grew restless
and pen became enraptured
my eyes, hands and other parts
became electrified.

My heart spread rainbow in the room
like colours of youth and
lilts of life's melodies.

You who are sitting before me
have the power to
change my consciousness
into painting, poem, melody
or anything else!

I know you'll speak no truth at this time.
I've to be guided
solely by your silence, your eyes and
the inaudible appeals of your heart.

I've to settle before I lose the presence of mind-
whether I should use brush or pen
or my eyes, hands or something else
and create a unique
composition
all in you.

- -

(Translated from Nepali by Abhi Subedi)

Children

Even if they try to pluck it,
the flower submits itself onto their hands.
If it happens to prick their heels,
the thorn scorns itself all its life.

The dream too thinks twice, gets filtered to go soft
to be seated on their eyes.

Once positioned on their lips,
even the scariest of words
come out as a melodious lisp.

The hill river rushing downhill, mocking at birds,
having heard their clean laughter
repents for its pride
and flows quietly to Madhes.

Even If they fall during their play,
the nature, having come
under the spell of their creative sports,
doesn't know when they again start to play so full of jest.
Believing that they fall unknowingly
the ground, mostly, does not even hurt them.

Even after the ages of exercise, not any flower could adopt
the innocence of their smile.
Instruments of music, after their company
with music maestros for centuries,
failed to acquire the sonority of their voice.

If they smash, the flower vase assumes a smile
while turning into pieces.
For a chance to be spilled by their hands,
anything they hold gets spilled itself full of happiness.
For a chance to play with them,
water forgets about its own colourlessness.

I wonder –
didn't the Creator really do injustice?

With a power to defeat everyone without any battle,
children are busy at play with the most beautiful moments of their life.
Once they grow conscious of it,
those moments will have gone away
never to return to them.

(Translated from original Nepali by Mukul Dahal)

Suman Pokhrel

Colour Of Horizon

Standing on top of each morning briefly
stopping by each evening shortly
unmindful, my eyes are chasing,
my eyelids are sweeping with light the sky
splattered with colours piled out
after hitting horizon's last shore.

I am thinking
what is this crimson,
colour of lovers' hearts
torn from each other and
taking on to opposite paths,
or the reddish glow of minds
come together after
dark moments of separation?

Half of my life is soaked in colour
watching these red glows
spilled over the side-door that admits the day
and the bamboo portals
that shut out the day,
but could not understand
whether this earth and sky
part in the evening
and meet in the morning
or part in the morning
and meet in the evening!

☐

Translated from Nepali by Prof. Abhi Subedi

Suman Pokhrel

Commands

Commands-

you're sure to hear from above
if you're placed down below.

don't turn right – don't turn left.
have a dagger about you – stay away from weapons
go to bed early – work till midnight
keep doors 'n windows open – shut doors well
don't walk in pairs 'n groups – don't walk alone
don't look about – guard home round the clock
don't stay hungry, never – don't eat anything
don't wear clothes – don't walk bare-bodied.

I've badly failed to understand
why masters can't think.

(Translated from Nepali by Manu Manjil)

Suman Pokhrel

Desires

Desires
play perpetually

I am gazing-
desires
unaware of destiny
frisk about my mindscape
like children.

While playing children
break my mind's toys
lacerate its walls
peel away mind's layers
pulverise them and
throw around.

Desires stay unaware
of man's fragile existence
authored by scarcity

They are not demolished
because it's said they should not-
to be declared standing
on hope's ruins.

Desires unopposed, undaunted
romp around mind's cliff
swing fast on mind's branch
gallop on its broken piece
jump shaking mind's foundations,
sometimes they break mind's bell jar
spilling feelings.

It's fun assembling
mind's jigsaw pieces
scattered by desires
like assembling
my small daughter's toys
strewn about in her play.

I like desires like children
and their plays
that tease me now and then into
knowing life.

I salute my desires with a bow.
were it not for them to come and play
mind would be empty just like me.

life would flee
from my eyes
without telling me when.

□

(Translated from Nepali by Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi)

Suman Pokhrel

Entanglements

Let me not so much be lost in involvements
As would make me incapable of
Recognizing the fragrance of the flower
Beaming in my own yard; as would
Divest me of time
For the merry sports of children
Glee with the total joy of creation
Radiant in their midst.

As would render me oblivious of my time
For the wind carrying the scents of love,
For the birds chanting the notes of life,
For sparkling waterfalls falling yet gay
And, too, for the stars fireflies carry
Through the immensity of darkness.

Let me not so much be swept by haste.
Let me not lose the sight of myself.
In the rush of life's vicious circles
Let me not go spiraling towards a peak
Where vision would be blinded with
Tears, washing down life's rubles.

Not so much be lost as would have
No time to look at myself
Ever. Not so much, so much be lost, just
To see the hue, grace, glory gone
Off the face of my beloved
As I'd wake and be conscious.

How long would I run after the
Time,
My mind just a cosmos of void?
Will you please go journeying
For your own sake,
Till I come living a moment of life?

(Translated from Nepali by Manu Manjil)

Suman Pokhrel

Every Morning

Every morning
I wake up with the news
of bloodshed.
I feel my body,
desperate to know whether
I'm still alive.

I express my thankfulness
to the only Saviour:
"Thank God,
my name isn't in the list of those
who died or were
killed yesterday! "

- Translated from Nepali by Manu Manjil
© Suman Pokhrel

Suman Pokhrel

Fever

Fever painted me all over the body
with its warm kisses of love
for a duration unknown

Taking everything aside of my own being
it was a marvelous feel
to be cocooned into the grip
of this thin frenzy from head to toes
it was immensely ecstatic to
feel the passionate warmth over the skin
and was wildly delirious
to be caressed by its softness beneath the shell.

I want the fever to grab me forever
and want YOU
to be MY fever.

Suman Pokhrel

Heat

Heat is mounting up above the extreme point
as if it has sworn not to come down before bursting all the thermometers.

The wind is reluctant to blow toward us.
It seems to have gone somewhere with clouds for honeymoon;
that's why there is no sign of rain.

The sun's pouring down heat with all its might,
and is forcing its constant rule cruelly upon helpless life.

Heat has broken the bond between the body and mind;
man's body has become a wetland.
The sweat has soaked the body as if by a flood.

It has failed to know a difference between the skin and the hair,
and man's thoughts have been flooded from head to feet.

The sweat has stuck to the body
the clothes I'm compelled to wear.
An actor all his life, the man
is condemning the discovery of cloth.
The windows are non-existent.
Like a government of a failed state,
the curtains are in dilemma whether to stir.

The walls are releasing heat,
as if they are angry with each other.
The room has been insaned by the heat.
The bed is inflamed as if it were an oven.
The bed sheet is soaked with sweat,
and about to run away getting stuck to the man.

The ceiling fan is helpless like a substitute office head
as the heat shows no sign of obedience to its a relentless command.
The table fan is like a positionless staff of a government office,
spinning reluctantly hearing grudges from everyone in the room.

The electric power has gone to hide in the planners' bank account.
The child is crying, unable to suckle at her mother.

The husband is pouring anger on his wife,
the anger sprang from his unsuccessful plan and the suffocating heat.
For his wife the outburst of anger is not as scorching as the heat.

The tar on the road is simmering
adding heat to the air that challenges people's patience.
Unable to plant crops in the field, women have gathered
under a tree for a gossip.
The youthful ox on a leash nearby is eager
to know if the women feel shy of exposing their body only in winter.
So called elite women, the secret of their body only the mirror knew,
are revealing themselves with an excuse of the sweltering heat.

Everyone's sagility and skills have stuck
to the stickiness of the sweat.
The lovers feel that they are content
looking at each other from a distance.
The repulsiveness caused by heat is between them,
more powerful than all cravings for love and lust.

The sun is busy extending its reign
and the the vanity of the heat is constantly on the rise.

Even after all that each and every being here believe
that the heat will be defeated and coolness will prevail.

The experience knows
that the rule of an autocrat cannot last long.

(translated from Nepali: Mukul Dahal)

Suman Pokhrel

Home

Carrying the emptiness of the city filled with the
banalities of the world
as I enter my home,
many homes seem to be waiting for me.

The tune of creation I wish to learn following the birds
The view and colors I wish to see in the faces and in the mirror
The music of the heart I search in the crowd
The touch of love each layer of my heart looks for
And the fragrance of life that carries the proof of being,
Are all looking my way.

Having been ripped open and drained by the crowd
When I enter my home,
Many homes seem to be waiting for me
To give a shape to this life
Which is about to perish.

(Translated from Nepali by Mukul Dahal and published in 'issue 6' of 'Snow Jewel'
a literary publication of 'Grey Sparrow Press, St. Paul, MN 55121')

Suman Pokhrel

I Shall Bid No Farewell

Fell in love with these hearts and this soil
these houses, these walls and streets.

Living a fraction of time somehow
from the fringes of life
I realised some dreams
have lodged in these eyes
some hearts have entered the heart.

Well, didn't find life as anything special!

What heart touched is what is touched
what heart experienced is what is experienced
where heart lived is what is lived.

When will this time come up again?
where will these faces be seen again?
where will these hearts be met again?
when will these flowers of affection
will bloom forth again
within such proximity of a garland?

Alas!
which lake will these loves cross again?
where will these cool rivers of goodwill flow again?
where will these hills of faith stand again!

How far will such warm retreats give shelters
to hide troubled hearts unnoticed
without breaking,
like bird hiding eggs in nest?

I shall not go anywhere from here,
leaving these loves more than hearts.
I shall not cross these watercourses!
I cannot go away
leaving these hearts
that accommodate me entirely.

I shall not go out at all
given that my love is here
shall always stay attached to these hearts
I shall never bid farewell to this place!

But I have to send this body
anyhow from here.

□

-

□

Translated from Nepali by Abhi Subedi

Suman Pokhrel

Il Colore Dell'orizzonte

In cima a ogni mattina velocemente
fermandosi per poco ogni sera
incuranti, i miei occhi sono a caccia,
le mie palpebre spazzano con la luce del cielo
schizzate con i colori che esondano
dopo avere colpito l'ultima sponda di orizzonte.

Sto pensando
cos'è questo cremisi,
colore di cuori di amanti
strappato all'altro e
che prendepercorsi opposti,
o il bagliore rossastro delle menti
arrivare insieme dopo
momenti bui di separazione?

Metà della mia vita è intrisa di colore
guardando questi bagliori rossi
versati sulla porta laterale che accoglie il giorno
ed i portali di bambù
che chiudono fuori il giorno,
ma non riesco a capire
se terra e cielo
si separano la sera
e s'incontrano al mattino
o si separano al mattino
e s'incontrano la sera!

(translated by Rita Stanzione)

Suman Pokhrel

I'm Searching A Heart

I'm searching a heart
inside me-

A heart
That's ebullient by swallowing
The entire pain of the creation,
A heart jubilant by accepting
The entire tears of the world,
A heart aglow by merging
The entire dark within itself
A heart that's smooth, effervescent and clean.

May I be able to
Share with all a heart
Like the earth and the sky
Never exhausted by giving,
Give it to each bud, each life and each dream,
To each joy, silence and pain.

Searching inside me a heart
That perennially gives light.

(Translated from Nepali by Abhi Subedi)

Suman Pokhrel

Khorampa*

There was mela** of fogs atop
and around the hill.

Unknown that was to me
why the fogs chose the place for the mela
under the porch of sunbeams.

I chose none to ask
why the wind was blowing there
chasing the fogs.

Felt like asking
why Khorampa chose to stand ill-at-ease there.

But,
this too I asked not.

Why lives chose to be housed
in the hills of unease?
Where life sets out for a journey,
the end unknown to itself.
And
keeps going filled with wants,
towards an unknown horizon.

Then it ends, known to none.
At times being crushed under the rocks.
At times falling downhill to eternity.
At times being washed in the flood to the point of no arrival.

I asked none
why life ends in ways uncertain.

Khorampa,
yet, exists there with lives yet to drain.
No reason I sought for its continued existence.

The reason, I guess,
is just that

an uneasy rhythm of life
is more life like than an easy death.

Translated from original Nepali by Mukul Dahal and Manu Manjil

* Khorampa: A remote poverty smitten village in Bhojpur, a hill district in eastern Nepal.

** mela: a fair

Suman Pokhrel

Standing In A Market

Lost in its maze
Buried in its sound
I'm reading this market-
Listening to its crescendo.

-How much is this cock?
-No, I'm not going
-Come, what may!
-Oh, look at the other side!
-Yesterday morning, that is.
-Oh, how did you gain such weight?

This market
Surging with sound of stream
Slogged by monsoon rain
Paints its picture
With each stroke of speech.

But doesn't know its own face
This melee
Does not recognize its own picture
This hectic rush-
Only speaks relentlessly.

Addressing oneself—
-Move a little, will you?
-Across the river.
-Three hundred and twenty.
-Not sure, you know.
-Same place of last year
-Oh, from tomorrow.
-Who with?
-Where did you sleep?
-This is fresh from our garden.

You may collect a bagful seeds of poetry
By picking up these words.
Life may be climbing rungs of ladder
Stepping on each sentence here

But

Words caught in the competition of
Selling troubles and buying dreams
Even ignore changing colours
Climbing on their faces.

Only keep repeating
Their own dialogues
Never imagined before.

-Let us sit here a while.
-What kind of a man is this!
-Should have a look once.
-Where from?
-Oh, how can that be possible?
-Hot water?
-What did she look like?
-No, not everywhere.
-What time to go?
-Over the log.

Voices lost in pursuits
Of their own interests
Create their own music and return
Carrying each a melody of life.

-There's absolutely nothing today.
-I guess that's a little too expensive!
-Oh, so tired!
-Last time also it was like that.
-Forget about the tea.
-In the next house.

Do you think we can read out to the market
An easy poem composed out of itself?
Will it be possible to explain
The pictures to the market
Carved over the sky of its dreams?
Could we enrapture the market
By the symphony
Composed from its cries and mirth?

This market speaking life
When heard from each person
Is now making staggering confused noise
Of all people speaking together.

Pristine river of lives
Is swallowed by the crowd-
Human getting lost into humans.

Man and woman cease to be humans
Once they get lost into crowds.

Is market like people
Who live as humans when they're alone
But live as great complexity
When they're in groups?

☐-

☐

(Translated from Nepali by Abhi Subedi)

Suman Pokhrel

The Landslide

Accursed are these moments
for no sake.
accursed are the faiths
and feelings

Ephemeral shelters for inside the bosom
why aren't the rivers
permitted to flow riverly?
why isn't the snow
permitted to thaw all away?

This iciness
is
not only on the surface
and is not only deep
it's deeper, deeper and deeper inside

Life every moment
everywhere
is a landslide, landslide and landslide.

(Translated from Nepali by Dinesh K. Poudel)

Suman Pokhrel

The Taj Mahal & My Love

Through years of my prime
I walked with a heart
crazy about love.

I wanted my heart to bloom
and shelter a shadow of love.
when the heart was soaked in passion
and was wet,
I wanted to wrench it dry
on love itself.
I wanted to paint a picture,
in indelible print, across
the canvass of my heart.

I stand today
in front of the Taj Mahal.
I watch the marble smiling
as the sunlight gives it a touch.
I feel gusts of wind
gone mad
as they come across
the heights of love here.
I listen to the music, waking in
the dream-eyed visitors' quiet hearts.

I am tipsy after my
own feelings
themselves have become wine.
I forget myself, world and all.

I don't know
whether I'm thinking of Shah Jahan,
Mumtaz or myself.
I'm quite disillusioned, stupefied,
enveloped under an expanding heart.

Shah Jahan who proved
an emperor to be shorter than a lover,
who turned a grave into a temple

who gave his beloved a place of God
and converted love into a prayer.

there exists one difference between
us two.

he was all in all, and if
I'd ever grown prosperous like he was,
I'd not have waited for my beloved's death
before I erected a Taj Mahal.

(Translated from Nepali by Manu Manjil)

Suman Pokhrel

Tree

Flowers climb the branches
exhibit their full blossom,
flowers visit drawing rooms.
they visit temples
and then they vanish.
defying fixed shapes
rivers hasten to no destination.
carrying countless goals
roads get lost in a maze.

Unceasingly
I stand
holding the selfsame earth.

Many couples came under my shade
and rose to ecstatic heights
of imagination,
tired porters
put down their baskets
by my side
and slept out dreams
like lives of longings.
children who hopped branches,
left as they grew
carrying mementos
to remind childhood.

Wild winds' whirling clusters
whispered a while
perching on my leaves
and raced towards horizons
chasing sky,
chicks hatched on my branches
grew wings and flew out
carrying tiny lives,
travelers who arrived
passed out from exhaustion
but they came round under my shade
and carried themselves away.

Many a time
slogging me through the day
the sun sought to chase me away
from my standing position,
rain battered me into water
threatening to wash me down,
storm nearly blew me by force
by melting me into air
somewhere like itself.

Rays carrying rainbows
could not stay with me
sounds of Naumati band and
monotonous conch-shell drones
rose in sky by turns
and faded somewhere.

Traveler living in a distance
four days from here
before leaving home
thinks of relaxing under my shade
and catching up with his journey,
birds herald the spring
resolved to hatch on my branches,
roads part to meet here
in case they got lost,
dusts and shriveled leaves
take a breather behind my leaves
escaping chasing hurricane.

Soil a muddy flow hit by rain
turns to its essence holding my roots.
lightning dancing with winking eyes
continued to tempt
thunderbolts played threat games
clouds acted as though
they were splashing water
to wake me up.

Never did I feel like
leaving this place

and walk.

☐

Translated from Nepali by Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi

Suman Pokhrel

Trees

My eyes are upon the trees.

For, trees do not live in fragments.
Till they fall, they stand
Flanked by life in its own embrace.

In the daytime sun is enough
In the rain, rain.
Their hunger does not outdo
The size of their won.

Breeze means a dance for them
Moon means joy.
When darkness accompanies them
They invite it for sports.

Trees don not seek to get
Beyond where their roots meet
They never dream of flying, Their
Roots in the air.

They do not need anything but
Soil to stand on.
They don't pine for a thing after
Branches, leaves, birds.
Trees do not allow, their dreams
To wander
Further than the horizon
Their eyes meet.

And I, weary of life's
Haste and woes,
Tired in the mind, body and all else,
Here sit on the earth low
And against the background of
The horizon of a rising moon,
Stare at the trees.

Ah! They are erect without cares

Those evergreen temples,
Across the landscape
Of my eyes.

Translated from Nepali by Manu Manjil

Suman Pokhrel

You Are As You Are

Standing on some non-life fringe of life
embracing non-existent shape
like winds that stopped blowing,
I would be living in illusions
with fossils of life's zest.

I would regard meanings
given by others so far
as refreshing boon,
I would still be enamoured of rose
or any heartless flower's smell
if tender tides of your affection
had not suffused
the pollens of my heart
with loving aroma.
modulations of my song,
images of my poetry,
my life story,
all would be making
a tedious dumb run
with no destination
sans beauty like
sultry gusts of drought
that flow over leafless treetops.

Sunrays would not descend
to lift my spirit
each morning
bringing life.
birds that fly singing for me
would not know
how to sing
filling their throats with love
welling up from heart.

My pleasures would escape
by climbing up empty times
thinking that is life
though not knowing

even half the mystery of love
not knowing
how melodious life is
if you had not demolished
shape of life's rhythm sometimes
by gripping my heart
tender like love
so fragile that
even your softest words
could break it.
if you had not created
the scenography of life
with countless colourful plays
of your wishes
my desires would wither away
by making false explanations
of the beauty of Creation.

If you were not
what you are
shaped by my life's melodies,
one who is standing
before you
overflowing with energy
carrying myriad desires
that would not be me.

☐

☐

(Translated from Nepali by Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi)

Suman Pokhrel