Nabarun Bhattacharya’s Poems

Traffic Signal

…the Policeman crucified at the crossroads

-- Mayakovsky

Not everyone can
Yet a few beyond death
Silently waits in the sky
Witnessing movements of stars
Like bewildered Traffic police

Did I ever know
Someone like him
Whose passage was never seen
Who had to leave
With hazy eyes
Before making sense of what is happening

I am unable to erase
Wondering about that
Dark water gust
I silently stare and wait
In the sky bewildered
And through icy glasses gaze
Reddening, yellowing, greening moon…

**Tampered Utensil**

I could guess it is not too far from pilgrimage
As the number of lepers thicken
Meeting with politicians frequently
Help me guess
Assembly or Parliament election is near
Coins Scattered
  On a piece of cloth
A blind old man singing
  The cruelty of God
  Name unasked
A politician I never met
But have seen
An ordinary tampered utensil in his kitchen
He is Lenin
Disabled Three

(1)
Raincoat of sky
Covered Diamond Harbor Road
That noon
A dumb boy and deaf girl
Crossing the road
That love was speechless

(2)
Touching with fingers
I felt all - face, nose, throat
Holding railings I realized it is jail
Cold weight of manacles around neck
Wind and rain came searching for me
Felt philosophy is brail

(3)
Undivided party worker’s leg
Was struck in firing inside Dumdum jail
Since then for both sides he uses crutches
A child watches and wonders
If this is what is stilt?
A Family Poem

Our family of three
Son Tathagata, wife Pranati and me
Three mirrors gazing back at us
In gloomy light like fish’s eyeball
The gleam that never sleeps
Perhaps a half shadow of luminance stays
Gas Oven burning in darkened home kitchen
Phosphorus touch on cheeks of sand and rock
Wiped again and again by murky sea

But it may not be my family
Perhaps my wife and son
Stripped and walked in Auschwitz Gas Chamber
Me a tailor or cobbler half skilled
Shot at head by a bullet near icy pit
With infected chest I used to come up from mines of Natal or Spain
Laid upon wooden shelves they coughed as well
Smoky sunlight spreads
Hoofing incessantly the sun vomits blood
Sooty lungs in the moon
In every blowing wind last gasp of us
So many times my family got erased
At homeland
Diseases, Bullets, Hospital corridors, Malnutrition, Fear
Everywhere, in all places, every time we were

We could have been Nikolai Bukharin’s family
We could have been brass country Chilli’s three
It is so common to see
Someone who claims to be a writer, someone who teaches,
Someone who is a student mad for sports
Perhaps captivated in Leningrad, coffinless and starved,
From Stalingrad my last postcard
Reached destination where nothing remained but shell hole
Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Karaganda
- Somewhere falling flat on the face specs broken
Hated Hitler heart and soul
Yet no allegation against comrade Stalin
At Dresden, Warsaw, Prague
Our pianos, wall clocks, toys charred along with us
Perhaps just now we gathered at Chechnya for prayer
After a while Russian bombs shall descend from sky
At Vietnam, Japanese day, Iraq, Rwanda
Many many families of three
Disenfranchised of even a photograph

However apart from all these there are so many unnamed families
Those who collectively commit suicide
Or murdered for reasons unknown
Some families vacate rooms as well

   Without prior information

MIRRORS ERODED OF MERCURY ARE Not MIRRORS ANY MORE
They turn transparent glass
In every blowing wind last gasp of us

ACROSS COUNTRIES AND CONTINENTS QUIVER, ASSASSINS’

   NUMBING HYPNOSIS

In this open eyed neon the executioner will arrive for sure
All three witnessing spider nets hugging constellations
Terrorized by absurd inexorable brutal meteors

    Mediterranean assumes silence
Killing Fields

O God, if the killing fields change
Shall I surrender my head
Before sword delicate like hair?
God, haven’t you told
To bow down head
I am prohibited.

Type

choked sky crematorium
city’s blue funeral
mounting stairs of meaningless days
nighttime hollow cough, drunkard’s face
erupts cough and verses
words while floating
on the road
in drizzle typewriter verses wake up
blind typist sits in the dark

Translated by Samrat Sengupta