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Three Poems from Jibanananda Das's *Jhora Palok* (1927; *Fallen Feather*)

(Translated from Bengali to English)



1. I am a Poet- that Poet

I am a poet- that poet-

Looking at the sky with a painful eye, I see the image of the fallen feather!

Thoughtless I am staring at the cinnabar sky afar!

An unknown desire in my heart in response to the mute blue sky!

The clouds in my heart are rising for an unknown kajori song (of rain)!

Frog-crying-river of sanana (July-August) is melting the weaves in the heart!

With the unconscious stream of dream

I have kept you mesmerised and forgotten.

That riddle unknown, I could not solve in life-

Oh! Fetters in the legs, on the paths, the riddles are there!

In a blink, I forget the rules of destiny on this earth and do not abide by

Where my whole life with an open mind, I have kept the plates filled!

A piece of land I kiss

Like a child, I bow down to the heart of shirish in silence!
In the jungle of tamarix, at the edge of the sweet pea fields
Like a parrot startling, I have come floating!
In the evening dusk, the tone of bhatiyali mingles with the river shore-
On the bed of sand, vapour steams on the water of the sloped river!

In the evening of lonely stars
Perhaps the rehearsal of my lover's lovely song is on there!
Here, fallen the torn grass-corn, bleak is the bird's nest!
Here, only the pain of an orphaned child, the crowd of widows!
It seems like a sunset shore- to somewhere faraway sky-
Here, I am called in need, I am called in the forlorn!

Note:

1. The poem, "I am a Poet- that Poet", was originally published as "Aami Kabi-Sei Kabi" in Jibanananda Das's Jhora Palok (Fallen Feathers) poetry collection in 1927.
2. Kajori is an Indian folk song sung during rainy periods.
3. Saona, also known as saona, Shrabon, is the fourth month of the Bengali calendar (July-August).
4. Shirish is an albizia lebbeck species tree that can be found in the Bengal region.
5. Bhatiyali is a kind of folk song mostly popular in Bangladesh and India.



2. Blue Sky

Sun glitters,

The sky of dawn, the blue of midnight,

You appear with overflowing beauty again and again

On the border of the prison wall of a deserted city!

-Here, twining the coil of thick smoke,

The tempestuous fire is flaming rapidly up from the furnace,

The crimson gravels are smeared with the heat of the desert,

Mirage- covered!

Million traveller's life

Dies incessant in search, they fail to find their path

Where their legs are bound with the stubborn chain of the regime;

O, wide azure, your palm with lakhs of rules and restrictions

Have broken my illusion with a magic wand.

I meditate alone in the crowd of people

With a mysterious indrajal from a faraway magic land

You came lonely to this real world of the blooded shore.

In the crystal light you spread completely the blue sky

Where the wings of a dream-peacock are silent!

The sanguine words of the hunter-wounded Earth get erased in my eyes

Where glows the gouri (pure) lamp-flame of the endless (eternal) sky!

The tear-stain of the Earth has become a fervid shore,
Torn clothes, insecure beggars, the merciless empire path,
This is a prison of millions and crores of dying people;
This dust- the deep cave of smoke, vast darkness
Sinks in the bluish sky- in the dreamy enthralled eyes,
In the conch-white clouds, in the ether of starry night;
Like a tiny insect, the cadaverous shell of the Earth gets destroyed,
With your startled touch, O vigilant faraway imaginary existence (universe)!

Translator's Note:

1. The poem, "Blue Sky", was originally published as "Nilima" in Jibanananda Das's Jhora Palok (Fallen Feathers) poetry collection in 1927.
2. Indrajal is a Bengali word related to a work or action that angers people (when in a trap), which seems more miraculous than real.
3. Gouri, the Bengali word, means white colour; it can also be referred to as pure.



3. Reminiscence

Gloomy night, by my side, sat the guest-
Said, I am the hunger past- your old memory!
-The days that ended with the rain of thunder clouds,
Got absorbed in the polar ice, desert fire,
I mingled with them like a shadow;
Where are they? The caged memory is crying in your heart!
He is crying in the ashes of your heart, beneath the repressed ashes,
He is crying in your dampish breath- in the tears of your wet eyes,
He is crying in the bare field of your mute feeling,
Wounded with the sword of your heart, angered with your poisonous blood!
Tonight, he is called by some faraway distance, -
Neither will he stay in the root of the Trishul nor at the door of Shiva's shrine!
I bestow him freedom- dancing with joy
Opening the door of my heart, escaped the memory of mine
In a new light- in the tune of a fresh dawn.
I was asleep, somebody was knocking on my door!
-Why I am awakened from deep slumber again!
See Lokalok- there, putting my feet on the mountain head
I was staring towards the crimson-coloured clouds,
Streaming through cold path where have you come from!

Dizzy eyes, your braid is floating in the storm,
With your ghostly voice blew the crematory horn!
The pupil of your eyes with the pupil of mine
Merged, I got lost in you!
I got lost in the root of the Trishul, at the door of Shiva's shrine;
The memory is lamenting- who will soothe- who will give him solace!

Translator's Note:

1. The poem, "Reminiscence", was originally published as "Smriti" in Jibanananda Das's Jhora Palok (Fallen Feathers) poetry collection in 1927.
2. Trishul is a divine symbol of Hinduism, a trident armoury used by the deity Shiva.
3. Shiva, also known as Mahadeva in Hinduism, is the destroyer of the Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva).
4. Lokalok, in Hindu mythology, is an enormous mountain belt, which means "a world and no world." According to the mythological geography of the Puranas, this mountain is situated in front of the largest continent, Pushkar.