

AMIQ HANAFI

Five Poems

BOMBAY, NIGHT, OCEAN¹

the ocean says something
the ocean, in the tongue of its cryptic waves, says something
the sounds of the ocean rip apart the fabric of the dark night
they froth
resound in the circles of continuity and succession
beads of notes, in the soft hands of cadence, turn into a rosary,
are drawn into the bounds of this sound's sorcery
the ocean's shore is a slate on which
rising and receding waves, dispersing, leave behind
Euclidian outlines of foam
abstract images of a strange order
writings in a script preceding Mohenjo Daro

on the floors of the Gateway of India lounge homeless beggars
over there are some gamblers
here, a hippie girl gathered in the arms of her hippie friend
drawing long on chillum
both desire a sign of Alamut's paradise from a sadhu
dive into the seas of hashishi rapture
as if it was a current of hashishi rapture, the sound of the ocean

those flowers of pale radiance on the darkness of the ocean
ships have scattered
none of their masts visible in darkness
ships rest
sailors must be steeped in the splendor-houses of the city

¹“Bamba’i, Rāt, Samandar,” from the poet’s collection *Shajar-e Şadā* (Lucknow: Nuşrat Publishers, 1975), 13–15.

in an ocean of tumultuous swarm
sailors must have merged, as drops,
here, even Narcissus cannot remain indulgent with himself

the ocean intones a magical symphony in which
resounds the blowing of primordial conch-shells of water-gods
stirs the ruffling of peacock-feathers of water-goddesses
sound, of insistent waves pushing against each other
sound, of roaring waves crashing on the shore-cliffs
sound, of this city thriving and moving in a state of inebriation
sound, of this city destined to stay awake day and night
sound, of this city where the number of men overwhelms
trees and birds
sound, of this city in which roofs of men seem to touch the skies
from doors, from outlets of streets and walkways, swarms forth
a human colony of ants
where, in consonance, each moment, with madly rushing
cars and buses,
machines keep reciting odes to the contemporary Age
the mechanical city next to the ocean resounds with tunes
on which dance songs of fire and metal
on the shore of the ocean is another ocean of men and women
the voice of this ocean drowns in the voice of the other ocean,
in the voice of vastness

CIRCLES OF REVERBERATION²

who is it who is it
who is it at whose arrival clamor set foot in existence
who is it who is it
on whose soles moon-dust has turned to a scab
perched on Hiroshima's rubble, the one who writes incantations
of peace with his reed pen
on whose brain are the tarnished marks of newspaper ink
mouth bestowed with flavors when not a single tooth
remained in the mouth

²“Gūñj kē Dāʿirē,” from *ibid.*, 53–54.

who thought of the bank when not a worthless penny graced
 the pouch
 who was granted a craving for looking when a brick sealed
 the eyes
 in whose heart arose a horizon of poetry when the blood
 in the veins of the reed-pen froze
 sooner than the script of Mohenjo Daro the one
 who is restless to read
 the warm writing of blood inscribed on his own face
 flowing from the wounds on the head
 on whose eyelashes, piercing shards of dreams
 are triumphant through the blood of vision's soles

bearing untold wounds on heart, the one who has returned
 inside from outside
 who is it
 who is it who is it
 breath raised a ruckus—who is it who is it
 the deluge of blood screamed—who is it who is it
 after knocking into each fiber of the flesh, voice refracted—
 who is it who is it
 bones reverberated—who is it who is it
 each fiber of flesh began to reel
 soul entangled in the knot of nerves
 who is it who is it

when the mirror splintered with my blow
 who is it who is it—my blood screamed from each filament
 stabbing splinters embedded in my fist shrieked
 who is it who is it
 there are echoes and echoes
 who is it who is it
 in the circle of echoes, untold circles of echoes

EBULLITION³

this pot has begun to boil over
this earthen pot has begun to boil over
this wild earthen pot of assortments has begun to boil over

since countless eons my spirit was mired in slumber
when Man, rubbing two stones together, had started invoking the
scarlet spirit of the sun
but, jangled by searing heat and pungent odors, now wide-eyed
stares aghast
they have begun to boil over; vegetables, herbs, fruits, meat,
pulses, and grain
only just, sounds of broth bubbling over were adrift
only just, mushroom-capped vapors wafted up to the
blue expanses
where is the one for whom the feast was being set
my spirit, awake, screams
this pot has begun to boil over
this earthen pot has begun to boil over
this wild earthen pot of assortments has begun to boil over

FIRST SUN OF THE NEW YEAR⁴

the december sun was not golden
the november sun too had turmeric cast
the first sun of the new year too looks withered

oh grains of Arab sands lush with solar blood
we hear, on the mirrors of your glowing faces
a hissing mist of protest and rage has accumulated
say, how much longer will the guileless barter
of light and warmth from the sun be suspended

³“Ubāl,” from *ibid.*, 65.

⁴“Na‘ē Sāl kā Pehlā Sūraj,” from *ibid.*, 69.

until when will the sun not concede
 that you and it are mirrors facing each other

PRAYER⁵

from the encumbrance of untold solar systems if
 you can spare a moment,
 cast a glance at the tear of penitence on the watery edge of
 my eyes too
 a twinkling star like some hymn of mercy

this earth
 a lowly atom of your creation
 and I an inconsequential element of this atom
 my role, to preserve words in the joyful rhythm of meanings'
 pulse
 my words, x-rays of contagion spread by my split-image germs
 alien world—alien its experience
 word, alien—rhythm, alien
 even so someone wheezed into my ear
 whatever I am doing
 whatever I am writing
 is my creation
 I too, in my own bounds—a creator
 and this diabolical wheeze
 got to my head
 my spirit
 I found in motionless quaver over waters for six days
 invoking the word “Be” when I opened my eyes, I saw
 this earth, this sky
 light, water, air, land, trees,
 the moon, the sun, the milky-way, beasts, jinns, humans, angels,
 have become one as a chorus
 and are smirking at me
 all around me is blissful creation

⁵“Du‘ā,” from *ibid.*, 77–78.

oh Lord of the daybreak
if you can spare a moment
on my hushed selfhood
confer some light and warmth from your sun
and pronounce: go, my creation, be my sign
from me to your soul
or from the soul, become a chronicle of my passing

—*Translated by Riyaz Latif*