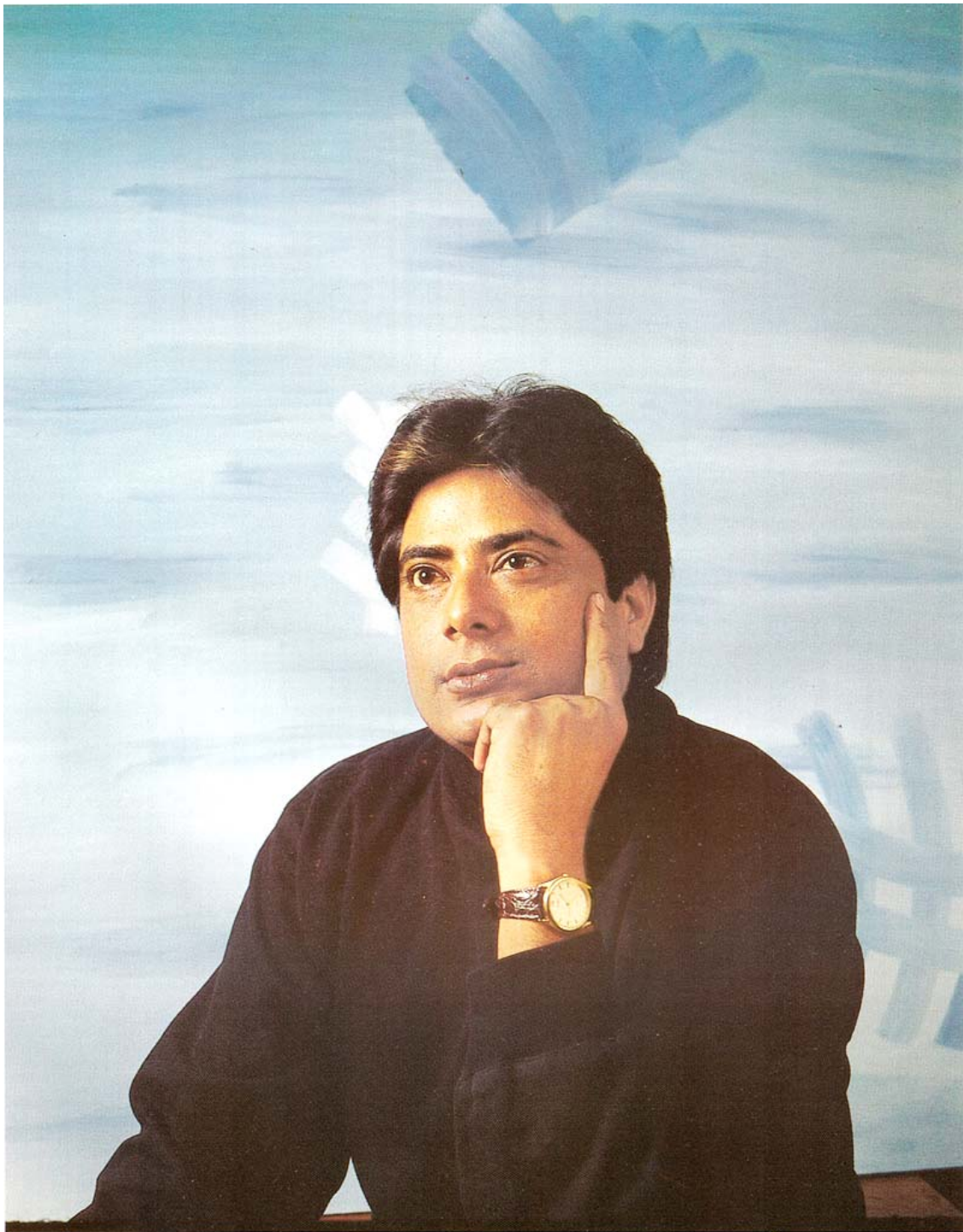


COSMIC CELEBRATION

SHEO NARAYAN SINGH ANIVED



Dedicated to the memories

..... of Baba and Behenia

..... and all those in human civilization

who have been victimized,

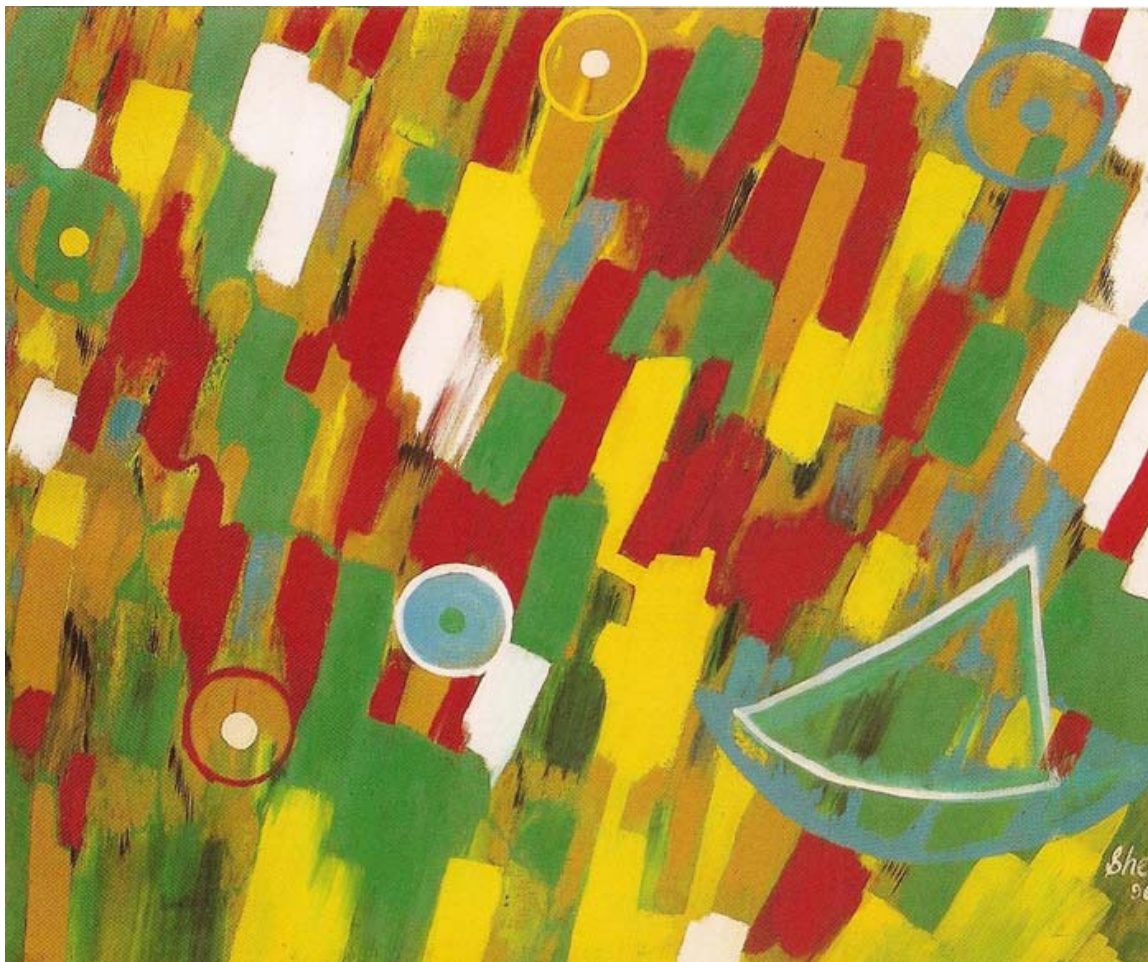
for being simple, innocent, straight,

self respecting and honest,

who have ultimately contributed in

making the world a better place to live in

or generations to come



Moonlit Night, 1996, oil on Canvas,112x92 cms

effort, I feel, is to explore and experiment the visual language and in doing so, he steers clear of the perception that an artist must have a particular style, leaving no space for differentiation. I agree with Keshav Malik, who says that 'Life is a miracle and so is art, and art which expresses life is as mysterious as life. It escapes all formulas.'

These paintings express a conglomeration of feelings. For me it very poignantly voiced one emotion--pain. I vividly see the painting "Truth" at this moment, which has made me realize that pain, like a note of music, need not be interpreted, need not be understood, need not answer questions--pain is believed.

A WORD OR TWO

Shea Narayan Singh Anived

Often confronted with the question, 'how have you learnt to paint', my answer has been, I have learnt painting, like everything else from life itself. What has really mattered is that I feel happy as a painter. A successful exhibition, an award or recognition by the public, are good things to come by in a painter's life, but these have never left a lasting impression as painting does.

As far as I can recollect, from a tender age to the moment, destiny had a very major role to play in putting fetters on my dreams. I always had to transcend barriers, break bondages and revolt. My late grandfather's initial grooming, had a lasting impression on my life. I worship him everyday. The ideals, percepts and principles I imbibed from him framed my personality and perception of life.

Colours liberate me. I write poems too. I feel words are like roots, they bind me to the earth. Colours give me space. Painting for me is like love. It is a very responsible act. Every touch of canvas is very sensitive. When I paint, I am into the painting. It has excavated me. I have been able to dig out so much buried inside me. I believe, that in art or in life, I should remain the same person. There has to be integrity of principles which should be the same in every walk of life.

I am an artist of action and interaction, Everyday something new happens to me. Whenever I am before a canvas, I am a new person. Something is added, something is subtracted from my total reservoir of memories, emotions, experiences, intellect and spirituality. Painting for me is a process or transferring a lot of myself on to the canvas. It is a very painful process. It is like be' thrown into the chilled water and one does not know how to get out of it. I feel, that' the true and sensitive awareness, of one's inner and outer world teaches one, which



Excavation, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 112x92 cms

Colours to pick, which strokes to make and what to do with the canvas, at every succeeding moment

Literature, prepares me for painting. Besides my grandfather, my other gurus have been Kafka, Tolstoy, Dostovesky, Sartre, Milan Kundera, Prem Chand and Kabir. Kafka expresses the eternal conflict of my intimate and external obligations. Tolstoy elevates me spiritually; Dostovesky gives psychic insight into human nature. Sartre expresses the deliriums of passionate living. Milan Kundera keeps me contemporary. Prem Chand binds me to my rural roots. Kabir liberates me from this world and that, like painting.

COSMIC CELEBRATION

Prof. Udai Narain Tewari

Art Historian

Sheo Narayan Singh *Anived's* paintings are an outcome of cosmic celebration. The painter and poet in him, celebrates a cosmic awareness in his work, by expanding the dignity of being, to reach out the aesthetic challenges of becoming. Colour for him is language. Each stroke centralizes the empty spaces one seeks. It is thus the silence in his paintings, which one has to learn in order to understand them. Silence has its pauses and its hesitations, rhythm, experience and reflection. Just as with words, there is analogy between our silence with men and with God. To learn the full meaning of the one, creativity demands practice to deepen the other. Sheo, who is also a significant Hindi poet, is deeply aware of this.

It is an intimate and extraordinary gift, for which the artist in Sheo Anived, is accountable to the unrealized dreams, hopes and aspirations of people, who have entrusted him the space to create in silence. It is a self-revealing task to learn and to create the silence of a people. Few have such a special gift. Perhaps this explains, why Sheo Anived excels, in translating the grammar of silence, in his art. Silence is virgin solitude, delightfully hiding memories and the law of harmonious power. Silence embraces the whole of nature blossoming in all her unseen beauty and magnificence, communicating to the viewer, invisibly and inaudibly, all her love and her entire soul. The cosmic celebration and the eloquence of silence, in his art could be appreciated meaningfully, if a light is thrown on his upbringing, education and the span or- his quest, for the unknown and the unseen.

Born in the second decade of independence, on October 18, 1961, .in Village Oghani, District Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, (India), Sheo Narayan Singh studied science in school and college, but was always deeply interested in Literature and



Cosmic Celebration, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 112x92 cms

Arts. He graduated in Pharmaceutical Engineering from the Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi in 1981, but studied Literature, Visual Arts, History' and Sociology on his own. He appeared for Civil Service Examination, 1982 with History and Sociology as his optional subjects and was selected for Indian Customs & Central Excise Service. He joined the service in 1983 and was again faced with the contrast of inner desire of a creative life and outer reality of dealing with material world that his career demanded. Owing to his invincible desire to lead a creative life, he succeeded in leaving Customs in 1994 and joined the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Presently, he is working as Deputy Secretary, Department of Culture. The contrast has thus been, at the root of his search for medium to express the varied experiences of outer world and its conflict with the inner world.

Sheo Narayan Singh drew his early breath, from the pure, unpolluted, loving transparent air of his 'Village of Poetry'. Guided by his grandfather, a freedom-fighter, who never claimed for a political pension, the child in the future artist, was prepared to learn every thing from life itself-everything, that sustains life freedom, honesty, equality, humanism and creativity. Like his grandfather, who was imprisoned for six months during Quit India Movement of 1942, in a fake case, Sheo Narayan Singh has also been hedged in 'Chakravyuh' umpteen times and has been on perennial trial, draining out his emotional and creative reserves. He has fought, suffered, but never compromised. When suggested to go easy with his crusade against corruption and concentrate in Art & Poetry, he quotes from a poem of Punjabi Poet Avtar Singh Pash, who was killed by terrorists at the age of 38:

“Hathiyaron ke nakhoon buri
tarah barh qye hain
aur ab har tarah ki
kavita se pehle
Hatryaron se yuddh karana
bahoot jaroori ho gqya hai.”

The wide span and the interplay of various disciplines and constant breaking of

barriers, his life has journeyed through, must have created inner tensions. But the creative artist in him is always able to transform the tension into work of visual joy, in freedom unchained by outer obligations. Such a wide interplay of life, helped in a profound manner to strengthen Sheo's determination to remain his self and never to lose the eternal focus to create without constructing a spiritual prison. The obvious diversity in his paintings, in theme, tone, texture and strokes, is due to his multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional background- aesthetically, intellectually and spiritually.

A recipient of Lalit Kala Akademi Award for painting, Sheo Narayan Singh Anived's works have been included in various collections in India and abroad. He has participated in a number of national exhibitions including group shows of paintings by leading contemporary artists of India like B.C. Sanyal, Jogen Chiudhury, Dinkar Kawshik, K.G. Subramanyam, Jeram Patel, Piraji Sagara and others. He has participated in international conferences/events related to art and culture, and has gained tremendously from exposures to Art galleries/ Museums of USA, UK, France, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

Sheo Narayan Singh delights in reminding of his roots, the notalgia never dissipates. Aloof, a loner with an aura of melancholy, impulsive and instinctual, always faithful to his own convictions, he has the Cowboy's attitude of ultimate honesty. Keenly interested in theatre, canvas for him functions as an arena, in which to act and role played while creating, is more important for him than the development of subject or style. Attaining the happiness through self discovery, his problems are what propel him to create, in unison with flow of feelings at the moment of creation.

Sheo's real struggle is with his soul, and to be able to grapple with the soul, there is neither map nor discipline. He knows that no real emotion is possible unless the soul is stirred the body is burning and the strokes on the canvas exalted



Love in springs, 1997, Oil on Canvas, 112x92

Into purest essence. During this on-going struggle, the artist has to drive away the muse and remain alone so that the soul in this manner always presupposes a radical change of all forms based on old structures, giving a sensation of freshness wholly unknown, having the quality of a newly created miracle. It produces in the end an almost spiritual enthusiasm. A profound, human, and tender cry of communion with the cosmos through the five senses, by virtue of the awakened soul. A real and poetical abstraction from this world, pure and serene.

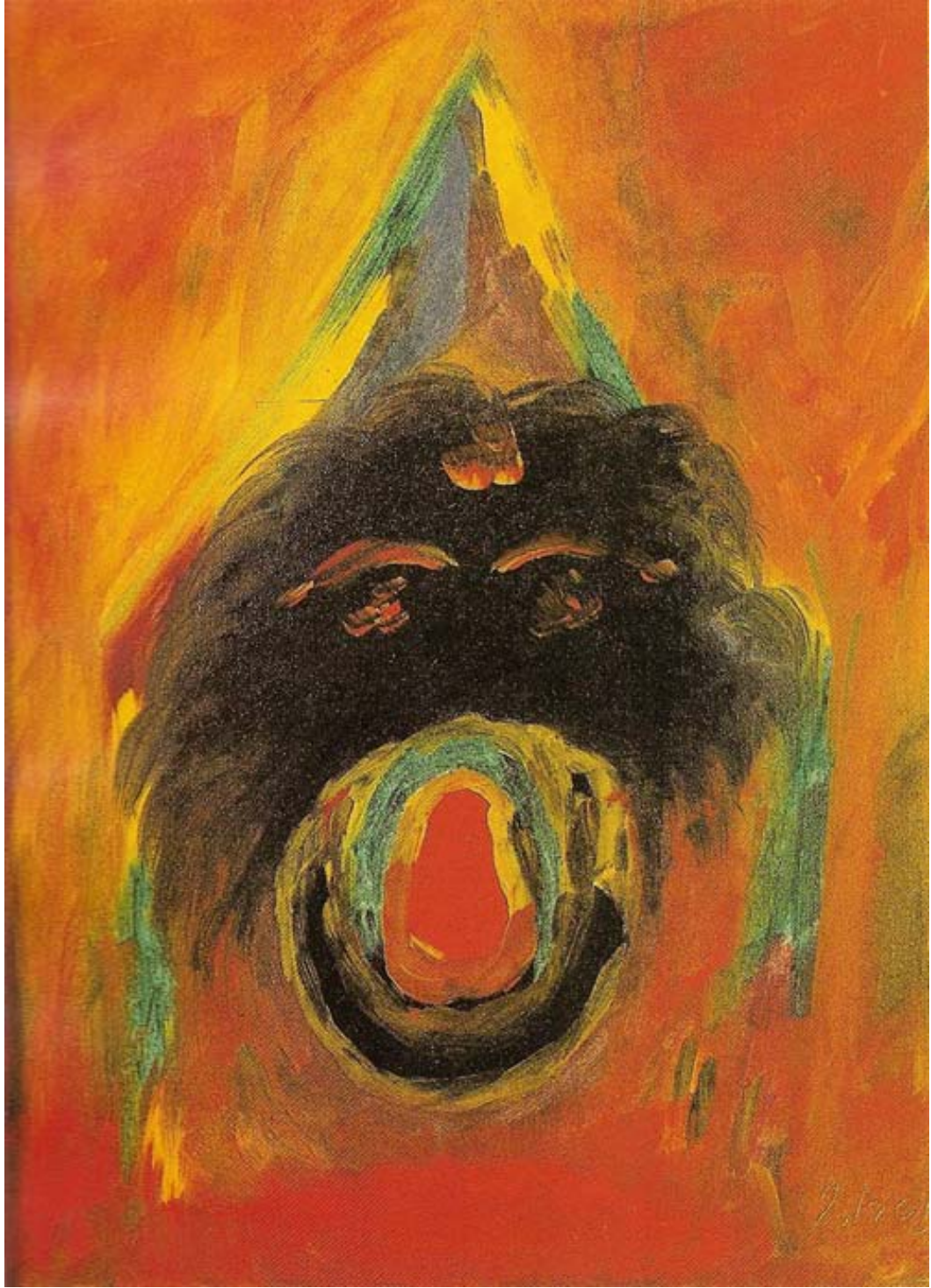
His paintings do not appear just from his brush; rather they surge from his soul, which means that they are not just a matter of ability, but of real live form: of blood; of ancient culture; of creative action. He uses his brush and colour to give expression to his actions and emotions, infusing direct flow of his personality into his work. His paintings are feelings declared in colour-feelings triggered by places, memories, incidents and psychic processes. His paintings carry stories but only in their titles. COSMIC CELEBRATION is the reincarnation of the inner space made of music which is part of universal majestic concert. Lucretius, many centuries ago, conjured up visions of human beings composed of spirits being able to fly, disappear in the air and again come back to solid forms. The 17th century French writer Cyrano de Bergerac vividly describes that matter and chance create man and thus a small error could always make man a stone or a flower. In other words, the inner space is nothing but a super string or vibration. The artist in Anived, feels those vibrations through his brush and creates cosmic celebration, as if it is an elegy to a nymph brighter than the sky, reflecting a fresh look at stars, a beauty for a thousand centuries eternized. ENIGMA is related to an incident of a sick child's romance to doubt and question the efficacy of the God enshrined in a Varanasi temple called 'Kalbhairao'. The sick child is none else than Sheo Narayan Singh seventeen years ago when he was brought to the aforesaid temple to have drashan in order to be cured. But side by side his doubt and question the child in Sheo Anived was also confronted with the reality that if religion was so daunting, why do people believe in God and religion? EXCAVATION is an outcome of an endeavour on the part of the artist to extricate him from the pernicious grip of the



Lightness of Being, 1997, Oil on Canvas, 174x128

system. He has excavated himself, his past, and his memories in this painting. He absorbs new sensations and feelings and eventually filters them through the screen of his personality. There is the mystery of the painting itself, evoking an emotional response from the viewers - space, colour, texture, and irradiation of the flat surface of the canvas demanding their own conclusions; organic growth springing from the first stroke on the painting to the last final touch. LIGHTNESS OF BEING is an endeavour to visualize Einstein's theory of relativity by erasing, all memories of the past and then moving at the speed of light to experience the existence of being. The lightness goads you to feel as if the shadowy midnight, stands by the wayside or it has come right down on the road and strewn it with stars and you cannot cross the road to go beyond the fence without treading on the universe. SHIV A -SHAKTI is an upsurge, in abstraction, of the Indian mind having traversed all regions of knowledge surrendering to the bliss of the Dance of Shiva, who plays and longs and creates amid the flower of His creation. He is all rapture, all bliss. He is an eternal negation-neti, neti. He is all a wave of freedom and bliss. By a general conflagration - maha pralaya - the universe is embraced. SHIVA SHAKTI symbolizes the height of being - simultaneously in eternal joy and meditation. Sheo Narayan Singh belongs to Kashi region, which is supposed to rest at Shiva's trishul. It is but natural for him as an artist not to miss this great symbol on his canvas.

To sum up, paintings of Sheo Narayan Singh Anived contemplate the whole of cosmos in full and grand majesty; and turn our vision from low objects, which surround us. Each stroke of his brush yearns for self-realization-the synonym of cosmic celebration. Here, experiencing and reviewing life, is a very solitary man, one to whom institutions and organizations, which to most people mean so much, seem to mean almost nothing; one who is first and foremost a painter, who tends to assess, all other possible experiences, in relation to those periods of creative perceptions in which he himself has experienced that complete possible inner intensity which is his definition of being. For Sheo Narayan Singh, whose dedication to art and his vocation as a painter, there is something almost spiritual,



Enigma, 1995, Oil on Canvas, 40x30 cms

to whom most human activities and preoccupations seem trivial, superficial, and remote from man's chief end, as they might seem to one, who had chosen the spiritual life. His paintings have a liberating effect on the mind by showing entirely new possibilities; they help to stimulate energy and hope for a new beginning. They are clean and virgin art.

WORDS AND IMAGES

K.eshav Malik

Art Critic

Living in the Indian Capital, as one does, one is likely to be exposed to all the arts, though perhaps rather less to the patriarch of them -- the creative and re-creative word. And perhaps, it is for this lag that the other arts do not come to such fulfillment as may surpass their already considerable achievement. It is no use lauding the word overmuch but then, it is only through its services that the other arts or their makers find their path of progress. The word is, or may be, both creative and critical making us self aware in its wake.

I say the obvious, but which is worth reiterating from time to time, as on this occasion -- that is, while going over Anived's paintings as well as his poems expertly Englished by Prof. Neeraja Mattoo. Well here in short, is a pursuer of both image and word. A rare enough happening on the scene, and for that very reason, due for a welcome.

Evidently, the painter-poet has been exposed to the arts, in their protean variety. He had authentic music on, on his disc, as he put up his paintings for a private viewing. These paintings have come of age, being in them, suggestive of the great night-time space around mother-earth. The subtle correspondence, realized between the whizzing comets and the tiny daubs in the pictorial space was imaginative. Clearly the artist in this poet has a good advantage in that, he is also a craftsman of the word and phrase and which skill implies the powers of attention honed to a fine. It also may imply the power of connection, of questioning and challenging stock ideas and stale images.

Some such self scrutiny is evident if you go over the body of his poems. Several of them, musings on the creating personality itself, or else on the habitat, in which the persona is dependent. There is no deficit of the critical impulse over



Enlightenment, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 90x75

here and which of course is a sign of health. One can therefore, once again, aver that the creative domain, in Anived, means business, that it knows its way about. There is seed of life here. And this made me speculate, or recapitulate, on the meaning of the arts and that especially, as this painter-poet, is presently posted in the Department of Culture.

A painting, even as his own, is an interpretation of life. Life, itself a miracle, and art itself becomes a miracle;- when it is a perfect refraction of life. There must be a refraction of life, for art to exist, a stylization or synthesis, if you like, of living experience. (Sheo's own key experiences being from the legendary Varanasi). At any rate, the more extreme the refraction, the more abstract art becomes. Those comet simulating paintings by Anived are tell-tale in this context. The elements of life are all there in the artist's brush. A photograph comes from the retina of the camera, an abstract painting, like his, from the retina of the mind.

All 'art proper is essentially simple. In it, the artist is concerned only with the expression of an inward vision in the most direct and appropriate manner possible. In his works, Anived has discarded everything that is not essential to the complete realization of his vision. In these, there is no mere ingenuity in place of art, artificiality in place of thought, or perplexity in place of lucidity. In these works, mind takes the direct way to rid itself of its content, in a concrete form.

I said that life is a miracle, and so art. But art, which expresses life, is as mysterious as life. It escapes all formulas as life does. It is only here and not really in the routine of sciences, that we really recognize ourselves. It has been said that the artist is sufficient unto himself. That is not true, for after all no one has more need of the approbation of men. He speaks or paints, because he feels their presence around him, and lives in the hope that they will come at last, to understand him. It is his function to pour out his being and give as much as he can of his life. But the artist, to whom men give everything, returns in full measure what he has taken from them. Yes, the artist is ourselves. The artist is the crowd to which we all belong, which defines us all.

Both, Anived's poems and paintings, are neither amusing, nor are they entertaining or propaganda or an exhortation. They contain, no indictments or proposals, although we live in such trying times. Like all aspiring work, they only tell their viewers or readers, the secrets of their own hearts. The poet's business is to speak out, make a clean breast.

But these better not be not his own personal secrets, the secrets he utters ought to be our own. The reason why artists and poets speak out is because no community altogether knows its heart. And by failing in this knowledge, a community deceives itself on the one subject concerning which ignorance is death.

For the evils which come from such ignorance, all genuine artists suggest no remedy because they have already given one. The remedy is the work of art-painting or poem itself. Art after all as said is the community's medicine for the worst disease of mind, namely, the corruption of consciousness.

Well, in recounting man to us, art and poetry teach us to know and understand ourselves. Most assuredly, art is the appeal to the instinct of communion in men. We recognize one another by the echoes; it awakens in us and which we transmit to others by our enthusiasm. If during the hours of depression and lack of comprehension, only a few of us hear the call, it is in those very hours too that we possess the energy which later, is to reanimate the heroism asleep in the multitudes.

Too much talk of art is counter productive, but from time on, we are perforce obliged to spell out its reason of being a bit. But then it is only by listening to the heart that one can speak of art without belittling it. Not until we have expressed in some sort of language of feeling, the appearance of the things about us, do these



Shivashakti, 1997, Oil on Canvas, 60x45 cms

things exist for us and retain their appearance. If art were nothing, but the reflection of societies, we should ask no more of art 'than that it teaches us history. But, it really recounts man to us and through him the universe -- as in Anived's works. These go beyond the moment, like all good art, they lengthen the duration of time, widen the comprehension of man, and extend the life and limit of the known universe.

कविता में जीवन का संधान

केदारनाथ सिंह

अनिवेद, की कुछ कवितायें पहले भी देखी थीं, पर समवेत रूप में इतनी कविताओं को पढ़ने का अवसर पहली बार मिला। इन्हें पढ़कर जो पहली प्रतिक्रिया हुई वह यह कि ये एक ऐसे व्यक्तित्व से निकली हुई हैं जिसका अनुभव—संसार गांव से शहर तक फैला हुआ है। यह उल्लेखनीय है कि शिव नारायण सिंह 'अनिवेद' के व्यक्तित्व के कई महत्वपूर्ण आयाम हैं। वे एक सफल प्रशासनिक अधिकारी हैं, एक चर्चित कलाकार हैं और इन दोनों के साथ-साथ काव्य लेखन के क्षेत्र में भी अच्छी-खासी ख्याति अर्जित की है। अपने यहां भी ऐसे कुछ कवियों, के नाम लिये जा सकते हैं। 'अनिवेद' की ये कवितायें उसी परम्परा को आगे बढ़ाने वाली कवितायें हैं। इन कविताओं से गुजरते हुए ऐसा लगता है कि कवि अपने चित्रों के समानान्तर एक और दुनिया रचने के संघर्ष में जुटा है, जिसकी नींव रंगों में नहीं, भाषा के भीतर है। अभिव्यक्ति के एक माध्यम से दूसरे माध्यम में संचरण का यह रचनात्मक संघर्ष, पाठक के मन पर एक विशेष प्रकार का प्रभाव छोड़ता है और यही प्रभाव इन शब्द-सृष्टियों की प्रामाणिकता को पुष्ट करता है।

जहां तक इन कविताओं की बनावट का सवाल है, जो बात हमारा ध्यान सबसे पहले आकृष्ट करती है, वह यह कि ये आधुनिक मन की सहज कवितायें हैं।

'आधुनिक' और 'सहज' दोनों का योग जरा कम ही मिलता है और यहां दोनों की सह-स्थिति दिलचस्प है। ये निरलस और निरायास घटित होने वाली कवितायें हैं और यह निरायासता या आयासहीनता ही इन कविताओं को, सबसे अधिक ग्राह्य बनाती है। इन कविताओं के रचयिता ने अपनी कला के भीतर बिना किसी अतिरिक्त श्रम के संप्रेषण की समस्या को जैसे अपने लिए हल कर लिया है। यदि कोई रचना ऐसा प्रभाव छोड़ती है, तो इसे उसकी बड़ी सफलता मानना चाहिए।



Serenity, 1995, Pastel, 30x25 cms

मैं तलाश करता रहा कि रंगों में जीने वाले इस कलाकार की कविताओं में वे कौन से रंग हैं, जो जीवन की छवियों को उद्घाटित करते हैं। इसे रेखंकित किया जाना चाहिए कि इन कविताओं में शोख चट्ख रंग लगभग नहीं हैं और जो रंग हैं, वे आज के जीवन की गहरी उदासी और विषाद को संकेतित करने वाले रंग हैं, जैसे— नीला, भूरा, कथई या काला। यह रंग—बोध, जीवन के प्रति कवि के एक विशेष दृष्टिकोण को सचित करता है। परन्तु इन कविताओं के कवि की जीवन दृष्टि के स्वरूप को एक और विशेष संदर्भ में देखा जाना चाहिए और वह है कवि का ग्राम—बोध। 'अनिवेद' ग्रामीण संदर्भ से आने वाले कवि है और उस संदर्भ के प्रति उनके भीतर गहरा रागात्मक झुकाव है, जो 'कविता का गांव' जैसी कविता में विशेष रूप से देखा जा सकता है। यहां कवि गांव का आग्रही अवश्य है, परन्तु उस सबकी कीमत पर नहीं जिसे मानव—सभ्यता ने आज तक अर्जित किया है। कवि की कुछ अन्य कवितायें इस बात की पुष्टि करती हैं।

चित्रकला और कविता में जीवन के मर्म को उकेरने वाला यह रचनाकार इस अर्थ में विक्षण है कि वह पूरी शिद्दत से इस बात को स्वीकार करता है कि जीवन का असली मर्म स्वयं कला में नहीं, कला के उस मूल उत्स में है जहां से कला पैदा होती है। कवि का यह जीवन—राग उसका वह संबल है, जो उसके सृजन को फिर वह रंग में हो या शब्द में सार्थक बनाता है। "सत्यमेव जयते" शीर्षक कविता में, कवि अपनी इस दृष्टि भंगी को, इस रूप में प्रकट करता है:

'कविता
चित्रकला
संगीत में
नहीं,
जीवन में
जीवन मिलेगा।'

इस छोटे से उदाहरण की ध्वनि को पकड़ते हुए, यह निर्विवाद रूप से कहा जा सकता है कि कवि 'अनिवेद' 'कविता में जीवन के संधन' के कवि हैं और बेशक इस संधान का औजार कला ही है।

कविता का गांव

कड़ाहे में
पकते गन्ने भाप के पास
चूल्हे से निकली राख पर
उंगली से
बने अक्षर या
काली पटरी पर
दूधिया से लिखे
शब्दों से बनता
कविता का गांव
अधूरे शहर की
अधूरी जिन्दगी में कहां से लाये कवि।
महानगर की खिड़की तक
रूकी धूप
सड़क को रौंदती ट्रकें
पुल को थरथराती रेलें
कविता के आसमान से
सूरज चांद सितारों को
स्थगित कर
धुंध ही धुंध फैला देती हैं
और कविता के महानगर में बच रहता है

सिर्फ, हिंसा या भोग ।
कहां से लाये कवि
कविता का पूरा गांव
कहां से लाये
भोग की जगह योग
हिंसा की जगह शांति ।

THE VILLAGE

Letters, finger-traced
In the cold ashes of the fire,
under the steam,
rising from a cauldron,
of sugarcane Juice,
in milky words
written on black slates
emerges
The habitat of poetry,
No, not in half-formed towns.
Sunshine that stops
at windows in the metropolis,
Trucks that batter the road,
Trains that set the bridge a-shiver,
Blackout with smog
the sky of the Muse,
suspending the motion
of the Sun, the Moon and the Stars,
Nothing survives in the poetry-town
except violence and voracious appetite.
How should the poet conjure
a whole new habitat of Poetry ?

Celebrate dedication in place of
indulgence
And peace in place of violence !

गुलामी

सभ्यता के उत्कर्ष में ही
संभव है
पुरुष-स्त्री, भोग-योग
स्वर्ग-नरक, जीवन-मरण
दुख-सुख, साफ-साफ
खुले दिलो-दिमाग से
देखें, कहें रचें।
न कोई चोरी, न कुंठा
अभिव्यक्ति की पूरी
स्वतंत्रता।
ऐसी सभ्यता-संस्कृति
में ही संभव है
सारनाथ, नालंदा
अंजता, एलोरा
कोणार्क, खजुराहों
हम्पी, महाबलीपुरम्
ताजमूहल
कबीर, तुलसी, अकबर
अशोक, बुद्ध, महावीर।
क्यों नहीं हुए ऐसे लोग
बनी ऐसी कला

बहादुरशाह जफ़र के बाद?
गुलामी सिर्फ
देश का भूगोल ही नहीं
देश की धरोहर
कला—संस्कृति
सोच—अभिव्यक्ति
सब छीन लेती है
और सदियों
लग जाते हैं
दशकों की गुलामी
से उबरने में।

COLONIZATION

Only at the peak of civilization
it is possible
For Men and Women,
to see - tell - create
with an open Mind
Enjoyment and Renunciation,
This world and the other,
Heaven and Hell,
Life and Death,
Sorrow and Happiness,
Nothing to hide,
No inhibition



Harmony, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 90x75 cms

The total freedom of expression.
Only in a civilization and culture
such as this,
is possible
Sarnath, Nalanda
Ajanta, Ellora
Konark, Khajuraho
Hampi Mahabalpuram and
the Taj Mahal;
Kabir, Tulsī, Akbar
the Buddha and Mahavir.
We did they fade away,
Such people and the Art,
post-Bahadurshah Zafar ?
As usual colonization snatched away
not only over territory,
but our heritage, culture, art,
our free thoughts and expression.
It takes centuries to undo
the colonization of decades !

मै समुद्र हूँ

मै समुद्र हूँ

सभ्यता का विस्तार

देखा है मैंने ।

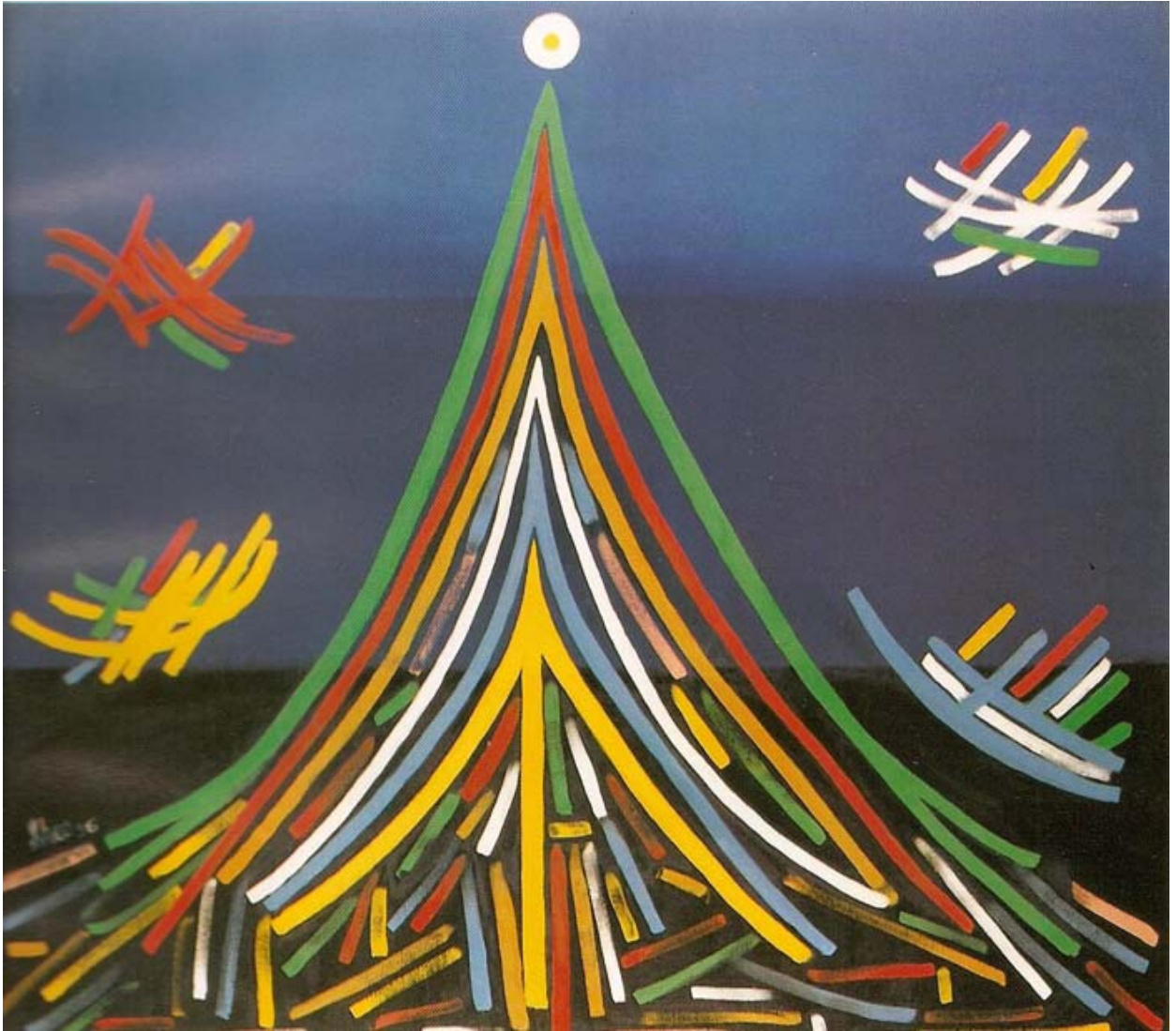
मानव के विकास का

साक्षी हूँ मैं

आदिम से उत्तर-औपनिवेशिक तक ।

अनगिनत ऊबड़-खाबड़

रास्तों से
गुजर कर
समुद्र बना हूं मैं,
जीवन दिया है
असंख्य प्राणियों को।
भीतर से शांत—गहरा
ऊपर चंचल,
मटमैला भी कहीं—कहीं
किनारे पर,
जहां दुनिया
आती है मुझे छूने
तैरने मुझमें,
पर डूबने कोई नहीं आता
सिवाय ढलते सूरज के।
ढलते सूरज
और मुझे
एक होते देखा है आपने।
देखिए
वही जीवन है
सूजन वही
कला वही
कविता और
संगीत वही
मैं समुद्र हूं



Immortality, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 175x150 cms

I AM THE OCEAN

I am the Ocean
I have seen the spread of civilization;
Been witness to Man's evolution
Prehistoric to post-colonial.
Traversing the endless terrains,
rough and uneven
At last-1 have become the Ocean.
Given life to countless creatures.
Deep and tranquil inside,
playful on the surface,
a bit muddied here and there,
near the shores,
where the world comes
to touch me, to swim in me,
But-no one comes-to submerge in me,
except, the setting Sun.
Have you seen
the two of us, becoming- one?
That is the way, Life is,
And so is Creation,
as well as Art - Poetry - Music.
I am the Ocean.

सत्यमेव जयते

सच्चाई

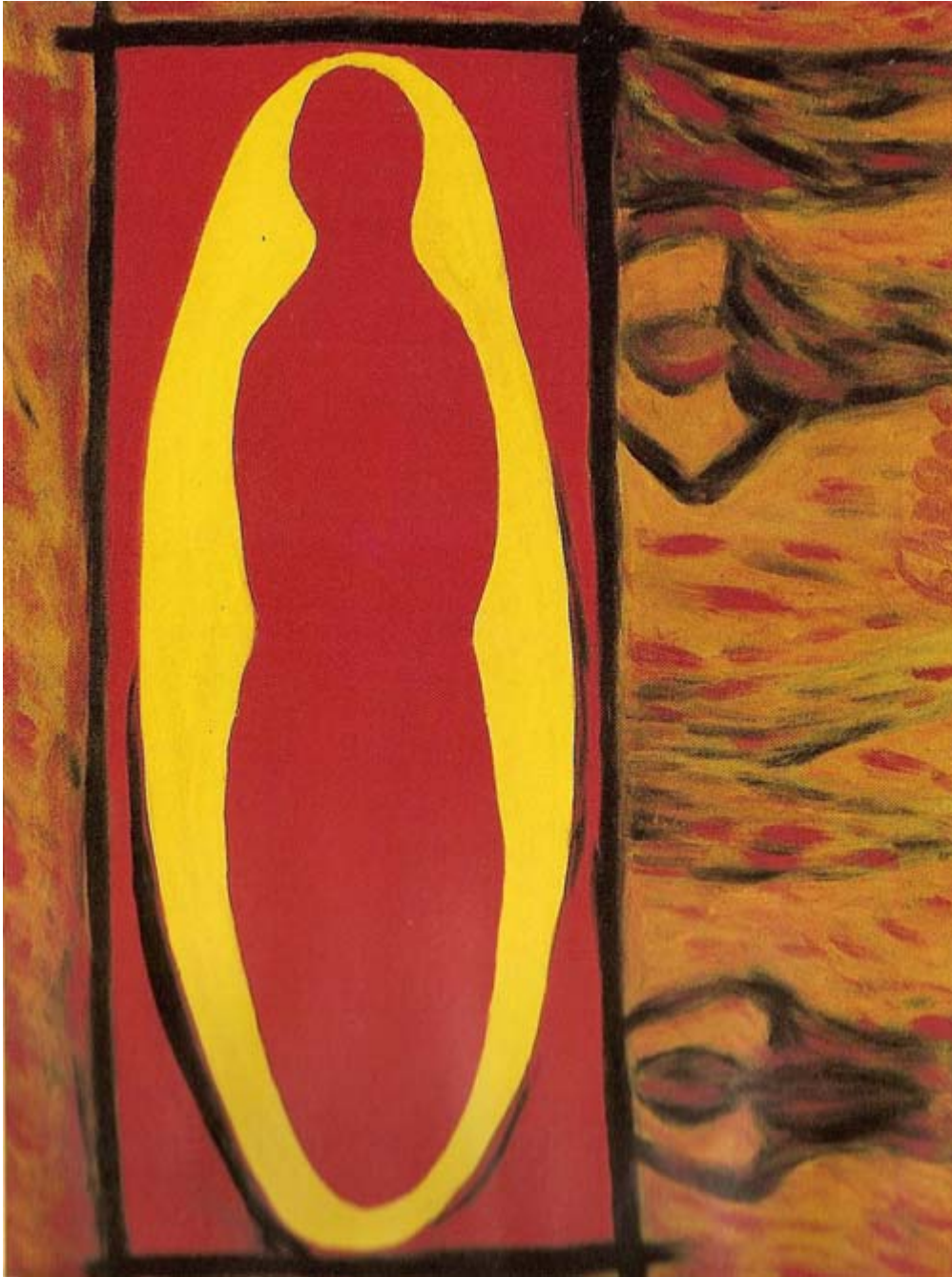
जो जीवन के वर्तमान से

निर्वासित कर दी गई है

एक दिन
जब मैं गांव अपने
स्कूल गया था
वहां मिल गई।
टाट और पट्टी पर
मौलवी साहब की छड़ी में
और चबूतरे पर
बाबा की घुघनी एवं शर्बत में
मिल गई।
उसने पूछा
तुम कितने बदल गये हो
याद है मौलवी साहब
तुम पर कितना फ़ख़र करते थे
तुम्हारे बाबा को कितना यकीन था
तुम पर
कि तुम सत्येमेव जयते को ही
ईश्वर मानोगे।
सन् 77 में तुमने गांव क्या
छोड़ा कि
मुझसे हर पल दूर होते चले गये
तुम्हें मेरी कभी याद आती भी है
तो सपनों में
या मेरी वजह से जो
थोड़ा बहुत तुममें इन्सान बचा है
उसमें
या जब बहन को याद कर

तुम्हारी आंखे डबडबा जाती हैं
या फिर जब बाबा का
पहाड़ा याद आता है।
कहां गुम हो गये हो तुम
अपने से इतने दूर चले गये हो
मुझे मालूम है
मेरे बगैर मुम बेचैन हो
मगर आत्म-निर्वासित जीवन जीने
के लिए अभिशप्त हो।
तुम्हे मालूम है
सच-झूठ का अन्तर
युद्ध और शांति से
भी गहरा है
जीवन-मरण से
भी बारीक है।
सच्चाई
अपने आप में
जीवन का मूल है
झूठ
मृत्यु का पर्याय है
जीना छोड़
मृत्यु तुम्हारे
पर्याय हो गये हैं।
कभी
सन् 77 से
पहले आ जाया करो

कविता
चित्रकला
संगीत से
नहीं,
जीवन में
जीवन मिलेगा।
सच्चाई से
निर्वासन भगेगा
तुम वापस आ जाओ।



Truth, 1995, Oil on Canvas, 60x45 cms

TRUTH

I stumbled across Truth
banished from life at present
when I went one day
to my old school in the village.
I found it in Maulvi Saheb's stick
lying on the matting and planks
And in the gurgling of Baba's hookah.
Truth asked me ?
"How you have changed !
do you remember the pride Maulvi saheb
and Baba
had in you!
How sure your Baba was !
that 'Satyameva Jayate'
would be your only God.
But you left the village in '17,
and the gulf
between me and you grew apace.
Now you think of me only
in dreams,
or in that little bit of the human
still in you,
or when your eyes moisten,
cherishing memories of your sister,
Or in the memory of the tables,
learned rote from Baba.
Where have you strayed
and lost yourself?
I know you are restless,
separated from me;

You bear this curse
if living an alienated life.
Remember,
Truth is as far from Falsehood
As peace is from War
And Life from Death.
Truth is the essence of life,
And Falsehood another name for death,
You prefer death to life,
It seems.
Lies, War and Death your other names !
Go back to life before '77, occasionally,
And you will find life
Not in poetry, painting or music
But in life itself,
And truth will return from exile.
Come back, do.



Nostalgia, 1995, Oil on Canvas, 112x90 cms

चक्रव्यूह

महानगर की महत्वाकांक्षाओं की हवस में
अंदरूनी मासूमियत, सुकून, शांति
को क्यों जला रहे हो?
नाम, शाम, पैसा, भोग
दफ़न होने के दिन नदारद होंगे।
साथ दफ़न होगी
अधूरी रह गई कोई कविता
अधूरी रह गई कोई पेंटिंग
अधूरी रह गई कोई खोज
कोई सोच, कोई बहुत अपना, जो
जिन्दगी के झंझावात से
न निकल सकने के कारण
साथ न दे सका कभी।
लोग, इर्द-गिर्द के लोग
जोंक की तरह चूसते रह जायेंगे
धक्के दे-देकर तुम्हें महत्वाकांक्षा
की सीढ़ियों पर धकेलते जायेंगे।
मानसिक विका, रक्त-चाप, हृदय-रोग
को प्रगति की अनवार्यता साबित कर,
वे तुम्हारे ही दिये प्यालों पर
तुम पर ही ठहाके लगायेंगे।
और तुम अभिमन्यु की नियति
ऐसे अपनाओगे जैसे उससे अच्छा कुछ हो
ही नहीं सकता।
वक्त नहीं देंगे कि कुछ पल तुम

अपने साथ रह सको ।
उन्हें डर है तुम्हारी सच्चाई
तुम्हें जगा न दे
तुम्हारे जगने से
उनके महल जो ढह जायेंगे ।
तुम उनके लिए
अलाद्दीन का चिराग हो
तुम्हारे ऊपर ही उन्होंने अपनी
सुख-सुविधाओं की दुनिया रची है ।
निकलो अभिमन्यु, निकलो
अपनों एवं अपने चक्रव्यूह से निकलो,
लेकिन निकल ही सका होता तो अभिमन्यु,
अभिमन्यु न होकर
पुरुषोत्तम राम न होता



Osmosis, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 112x95 cms

CHAKRAVYUH

In the lustful embrace of ambition caught,
why do you set
the piece of Innocence ablaze?
Name, Fame, Wealth and Possession
will all be gone
when you are buried.
Along with you will be buried
the poem unfinished,
a painting incomplete,
a thought, a search unconcluded;
a friend intimate,
who, in the storms of life caught,
could never come close.
And the people around you, leechlike,
will go on sucking your blood,
pushing you ahead,
on the ladder of ambition,
in order to prove that
paranoia, blood pressure and heart disease
are the inevitable accompaniments of progress.
They'll laugh at you,
drinking from the cups you offer,
and you will embrace the fate of Abhimanyu,
as if nothing better could happen to you?
They'll allow you no space to be with yourself,
afraid that your truth might awaken you
and bring their palaces tumbling down.
You are for them Aladdin's lamp itself,
through which their world of comfort
and ease is built.
Run, Abhimanyu, run,

from this labyrinthine fortification
of your own making
and of those you call your own.
But had he been able
to get away from Chakravyub,
would Abhimanyu have been Abhimanyu ?
Would he not be Purushottam Rama, Instead ?

चादर

द्विविधा में, दो अतिरेकों के बीच गुजरते लगा,
जैसे ठिठुरते भिखारियों के ऊपर जाड़े के बादल हों
जो उन्हें भिगोकर काठ बना देंगे,
और मैंने अनिर्णय की चादर ओढ़ रखी है
शायद इसलिए कि इसे जैसे चाहूं लपेट लूं
निर्णय का सूरज आये कहां से
वह रूठा ही क्यों?
कही ऐसा तो नहीं,
इंड का मौसम ही गुजर चुका हो,
तो क्या बसंत आ गया है?
क्या मैं चादर फेंक सकता हूँ।

यह कविता नहीं है

एक कवि कहता है,
सत्य के पीछे कितना दूर और कब तक भटकोगे,
दूसरा कहता है, कविता, अपनी आत्मा के साथ

आत्मसात होने का माध्यम है,
तीसरा कहता है, कविता, जीवन की क्रूरताओं से
बचने का साधन है।

पहां सत्य, भटकने का काम करे
जहां जीवन में, वे आत्मा से विगल जीते हों
और जीवन जी पाने की असमर्थता में
अपने से भागते हों, इनका सत्य, इनका जीवन
इनकी आत्मा, इनकी कविता, सब छलावा है
इनसे बचिए, ये कवि नहीं, मछुआरे हैं।

BLANIKET

The snag of passing through two extremes-
like beggars huddled in the cold,
under a blanket of winter clouds,
to soak them and turn them into stone.
And I have wrapped myself around
the blanket of indecision,
to turn it this way or that, as I please.
From where will the Sun of resolution arise,
why did it turn away in the first place ?
or is it that winter is really over,
and spring already here ?
can I cast my blanket away!

IT IS NOT POETRY

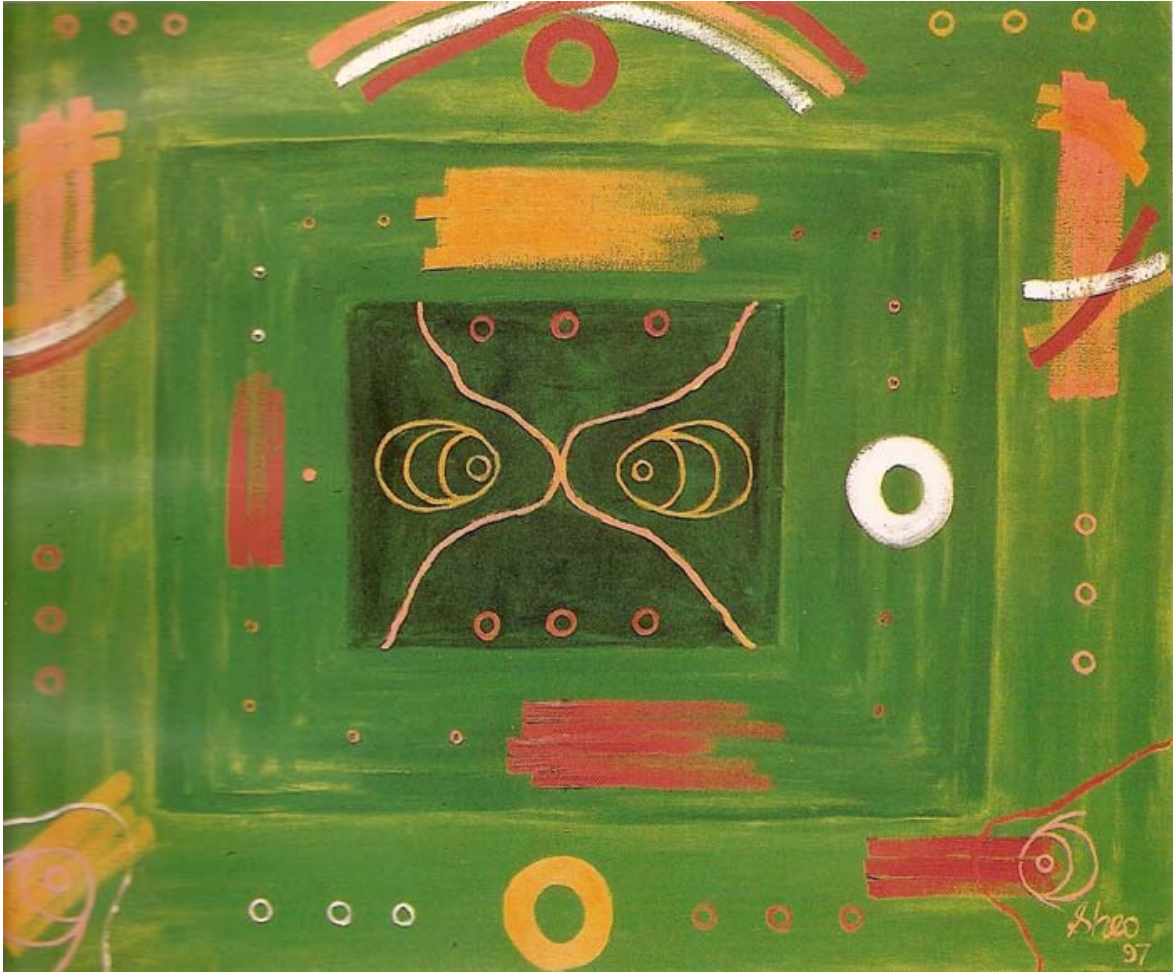
A poet tells, How long will you wander,
trailing Truth ?'
Another says, 'a poem is the means,

to find one's own soul !'
A third pronounces, poetry helps you
escape the tyranny of life.'
Don't you wonder too, that to those to whom
Truth only makes one,
wander aimlessly,
To those who live separated from the soul,
To those who need to run)
unable to face life,
Truth, Soul, Life and Poetry itself,
is only a delusion) a mirage ?
Shun them, I say,
they are not poets) but fishermen.

हम सब बनारसी

गंगा के उस पार,
किनारे जहां देवरहवा बाबा
हर साल महाने भर मचान पर, डेरा डाले रहते थे
वहां से, खड़े हो बनारस को देखते,
साफ लग जाता है कि मुंह खोलते ही
महानगर के लोग कैसे पहचान जाते हैं हमें,
शब्द अंग्रेजी के हों या हिन्दी के
पहचान का सहज माध्यम बन जाता है बनारसी होना ।
ईद, वसंत-पंचमी मिलन में
मंदिर-मस्जिद भेद भुला, ढोल-नगाड़े
मूर्ति-विसर्जन, साज-सज्जा, मिठाई-पान, अबीर-गुलाल
के साथ सब मना रहे मेला-उत्सव ।
यादों की सड़के जाम हो जाती हैं

और घण्टे भर में पहुंचने को कहकर चार घंटे लगाने
वाले बनारसी का ठहाका बिना भंग के
नशा कर जाता है।
विश्वविद्यालय में वी.सी., स्ट्राइक से ऊबरने के लिए
हर मिनट भोले बाबा का हाथ जोड़ता है
नागरी प्रचारिणी सभा में कविता पाठ,
श्रीनागरी नाटक मंडली में, नाटक हो रहा होता है।
सड़कों, घाटों पर बारातियों का तांता लगा
चाहे वह शादी का हो या अंतिम बिदाई का।
चन्द्राकार गंगा नहीं पर बना यह बनारस,
धो डालता है महानगरों की सब मैल,
मन की, तन की जकड़ी यादों को,
खोलकर लौटा देता है, महानगर में वापस,
बदले में बस कहलाते हुए कि हम सब बनारसी हैं।



Invocation, 1997, Oil on Canvas, 111x90 cms

WE ARE BENARASIS

From the other bank of the river Ganges,
where Deorahava Baba ensconced
on a machan for a month every year,
Look at Benaras
and you'll know, wry the metropolitans
know us for a Benarasi the moment we speak.
Whether the words are in Hindi or in English,
the easiest identification is our Benarasiness
The beating of drums
the hugs of Id and Basant Panchami
bringing down the walls between temple and mosque;
Watery burial of idols,
ornamentation and grandeur, Mithais and pans.
Festivals of colour and joy,
the roads of memory getting jammed
and the full-throated laughter
of the Benarasi,
the mirth of turning up late by hours,
get you high without taking Bhang.
The Vice-Chancellor at the University
praying for deliverance from a strike,
Poetry-readings at the Nagari Pracharini Sabha
Performances at the Shrinagari Dramatic troupe,
Endless streams of guests at weddings,
Or mourning on roads and ghats.
This city on the crescent-shaped Ganges,
washes off the filth and stains of the metropolis,
the encrustations of mind and body !
unties the rusted knots of memories
and returns you to the metropolis,
asking just to acknowledge-that we are Benarasis.

इतिहास

कभी मैं निश्चित था,
अपने साथियों के साथ पूर्ण सहयोग था।
फिर मेरा कोई साथी,
ज्यादे चालाक निकला और
उसने हमारे सादेपन को
खत्म कर दिया।
हमें जीवित रहने के लिए
उसकी गुलामी स्वीकारनी पड़ी,
हमें कोई आपत्ति नहीं थी,
पर उसकी जरूरतें बढ़ती गयीं,
और अपनी नयी युक्ति में,
उसने हमें थोड़ा मुक्त कर दिया,
पर अब, हमें कड़ियों का स्वामित्व सीकारना पड़ा।
उन्हें इसमें भी संतोष न हुआ
नयी युक्ति के अन्वेषण में
उन्होंने सारी सीमायें तोड़ दीं,
मेरे जैसों का उपनिवेश बनाया
फिर भी बात वहीं की वहीं।
अब हमने भी कुछ,
करने का दृढ़ निश्चय कर लिया,
काम इतना आसान था
हमें विश्वास ही नहीं हुआ।
वे तो पूर्ण समर्पण कर गये,

हो सकता है
यह उनकी मजबूरी रही हो,
अन्यथा ऐसे कैसे होता,
पर हुआ और आज मैं फिर निश्चित हूँ
शायद इतिहास ने अपने को दुहराया है।

HISTORY

Once upon a time, I was at ease,
in harmony with my peers,
and then one of them turned clever,
and destroyed our naivete.
We had to accept his bondage for survival.
We did not mind,
but his needs increased,
and he set us a bit free
New strategy,
We were enslaved by many
still they were not content.
They broke all bounds,
invented new strategies
colonized others like me.
But did anything change ?
Then it was our turn to do something,
it was all so easy,
we could not believe it.
They just surrendered,
May be they had no choice,
how else could it happen ?
But happen it did,
and today, I am at ease again.

History has repeated itself perhaps !

पुनर्जीवन

पहाड़

ऊबड़—खाबड़, हरे—भरे, ऊंचे

समुन्दर

नीला, भरा, हरा

लोग

काले, गोरे, सफेद

आसमान

साफ, धंधला, नीला

जीवन

लहराता, गहराता, दुककता

सब कुछ साथ—साथ

हर पल मिलता घुलता ।

पल भर में जीवन का

हर रंग रूप देता

इठलाता खिलखिलाता

रोमांच से भरपूर

सेंट लूथियाका यह द्वीप

बिना गांगे कितना विस्तार

दे जाता है ।

सर्दियों से जकड़े पूर्वाग्रहों

कुंठाओं, दूखों, असफलताओं

को सहलाकर

पल भर में नया जीवन दे

अपने अतिथियों से गले मिलकर
विदा करता है
नयी प्रेरणा से
नया जीवन जीने को।

REBIRTH

The mountains -
rugged, rough, luscious green and towering
The sea -
blue, brown, green
The people -
dark, fair and brown,
the clouds -
black, tawny and white,
The sky-
dear, blurred and blue,
And life -
swaying, deepening and moving,
Everything together, forever in a flux,
Every shade of life
radiating beauty,
preening itself
and bursting into laughter !
This island of St. Lucia
so full off romance: and excitement,
giving without the asking.
What expanse -
smoothing out and soothing
centuries off twisted prejudices,
complexes, sorrows and failures,

Rejuvenates in a flash,
hugs its guests and bids them au revoir
A fresh inspiration to refresh life.

मौन सत्ता के विरुद्ध

तनाव, भय, असुरक्षा, उद्वेग से
मथा हुआ, मन मस्तिष्क,
नाटक करना है, संतुलन बहादूरी एवम्
आत्मविश्वास का,
क्योंकि अगर उन्हें सच में
मेरी व्यथा का अहसास हो गया,
तो मेरे अस्तित्व को ही लील जायेंगे।
वे कमजोर करने के सारे हथकंडे अपना रहे हैं,
कुचलने को तैयार बैठे हैं,
हर तरह से आघात—प्रतिघात करते हैं
वे चाहते हैं मैं भी बन जाऊं भेड़, गिरगिट, केंचुआ
उन्हीं की तरह।
मैं क्यों नहीं बन पाता वैसा?
उनकी मौन सत्ता के विरुद्ध
मैं क्यों बोलता हूँ?
क्या बोलना बर्तन से निकलती भाप, जैसी नहीं है?
अगर आंच न हो, भीतर अन्न—जल न ही
तो क्या भाप निकल सकती है?
तो क्या भाप निकल सकती है?
तो क्या संवेदनशीलता ही वह आंच नहीं,
और अस्मिता ही भीतर का अन्न—जल नहीं?

तो आंच भी हो और बर्तन में अन्न जल भी,
तो भाप मो निकलेगी ही, निकलती ही रहेगी
जब तक दोनों हों
हां, मेरा बोलना, पके भोजन का
भूखे पेटों में जाने जैसा है।



Conscience, 1995, Oil on Canvas, 112x92 cms

(Collection: Yuri Kodera, former Director, Japan Culture and Information centre, New Delhi)

BATTLING THE GRIM SILENCE

When the mind is churned,
with fear, tension, uncertainty,
a role has to be played,
of courage, balance and confidence.

For, if, they suspect
the pain of my suffering,
they will gobble up my identity.
They lie in wait to debilitate,
their weapons in readiness,
to assault and crush me in so many ways
and turn me into one of them -
A Sheep, a Chameleon, a Worm,
just like them.

But why can't I be like them? Why do I speak against
the grim silence of the system ? Is not speech
like the steam rising from boiling pot ?

Can there be steam
without Fire, Food and Water ?
And my speech is like the steam
that asserts
the presence of food,
water and fire.

The fire of feeling,
The food and water of my being.
Yes, my .speech,
is like sustenance to the
starved.

लहरें

लहरों के थपेड़ों को सहता, बालू मिट्टी का समुद्री तट
भुला देता कि बालू, लहरों और आसमान
के परे भी कुछ है।

नावों, मछुआरों, बादलों के सान्निध्य में,
बालू और मुद्री पानी का मिला-जुला स्पर्श
प्यार का स्पर्श करा जाता।

और मैं कृष्ण का वंशज,
समुद्री लहरों से, राधा जैसा प्यार करता और
प्यार की ऊष्मा में, बादलों का इटलाना
गोपियों के उलाहने जैसा होता।

व्यक्तित्व

शब्दों पर भावों का प्रतिबंध, विचारों पर रूढ़ियों का
अनन्त भाव, अनन्त विचार,
इस छोटे से दायरे में कहां बांधू
जब मौन होता हूं तो शायद अधिक बोलता हूं,
और जब बोलता हूं तो सीमा में बंध जाता हूं,
और मेरा व्यक्तित्व किसी दूसरे का हो जाता है,
वैसे लोग मुझे मेरे व्यक्तित्व से जानते हैं,
पर मेरा व्यक्तित्व भीड़ का है,
और भीड़ का कोई व्यक्तित्व नहीं होता।

WAVES

The sea, sand and earth;
bearing the onslaught of waves,
makes me forget that anything exists
beyond the sand, the waves and the sky,
the nearness of the boats, the fishermen
and the clouds,
The touch of sand and sea-water,
makes me feel the intimate touch of love.
And I, a descendant of Krishna,
abandon myself to the love of the sea-waves,
My Radha.
And the turning away of the clouds,
feels like the reproach of the gopies.

IDENTITY

Restrictions -
of emotion on words
of customs on thoughts
How do I tether the endless feelings,
endless thoughts -
In this tiny, bounded circle ?
I am most eloquent when silent,
When I speak, I find myself restricted
confined in boundaries and my identity
goes off to another.
People do know me by my face ?
But, my persona belongs to the mob,
and the mob has no face.

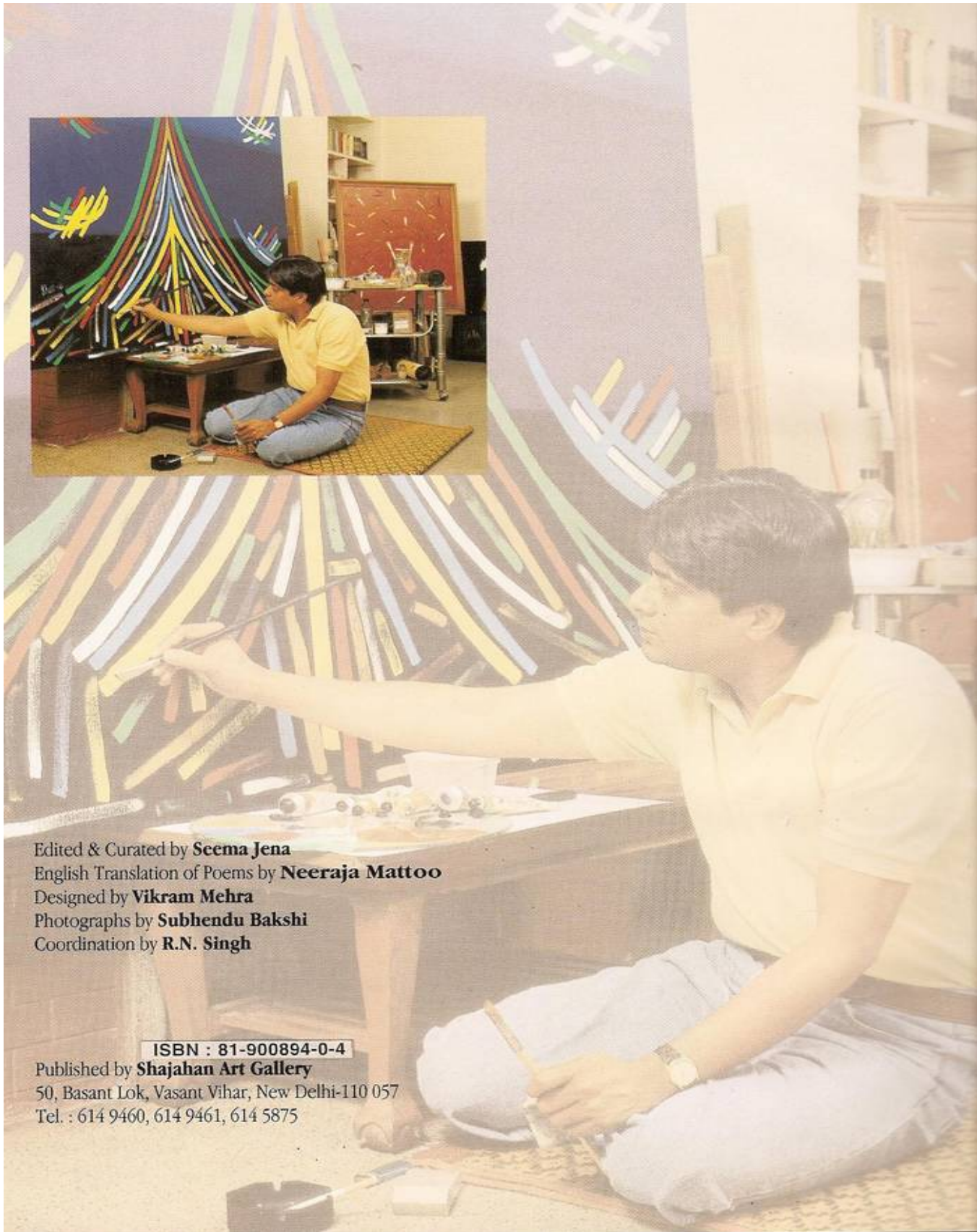
स्मृतियों के खंडहर

स्मृतियों का खण्डहर 'रास' द्वीप,
पोर्टब्लेयर की 'सेल्यूलर जेल'
से बार-बार माफी मांगता है।
मैं क्या कर सकता था,
जो गोरों ने मुझे राजधानी बनाया
और तुम्हें कालापानी।
प्रकृति ने तो हमें अलग-अलग
लेकिन एक जैसे द्वीप बनाये थे।
हमारे मूल मानव मित्र भी
भीतर के द्वीपों में चले गये हैं।
वक्त का भी क्या फेर है,
आज तुम राजधानी बन गये हो
और मैं खंडहर,
जहां पूर्व शासकों के गुनाह कैद हैं।
मेरा क्या गुनाव है?
मैं कब तक खंडहरों
का द्वीप कहलाऊंगा
मैं कब मुक्त होऊंगा?
क्या स्मृतियों के कैदी
भी मुक्त हो सकते हैं?

RUINS OF MEMORIES

Ross is land, in Port Blair,
goes on seeking forgiveness
from the Cellular Jail,

how was I to help it
if the whites made me the capital
and you the Kala Pani ?
Nature had framed us, into separate,
but similar isles !
Our old friends, the aborigines
have also withdrawn into the inner isles
What time has wrought !
today you are the capital,
and I a ruin,
in which the sins of the ex-rulers
are imprisoned.
What sin do I pay for ?
how long do I stay as island of ruins ?
when shall I be set free ?
Can prisoners of memories
ever be free ?



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