

“Wedding in the Flood”

They are taking my girl away forever,

Sobs the bride’s mother, as the procession

Forms slowly to the whine of the clarinet.

She was the shy one. How will she fare

In that cold house, among these strangers?

This has been a long and difficult day.

The rain nearly ruined everything,

But at the crucial time, when lunch was ready,

It mercifully stopped. It is drizzling again

As they help the bride into the palanquin (palanquin)

This girl has been licking too many pots.

Two sturdy lads carrying the dowry

(a cot, a looking glass, a tin-trunk,

Beautifully painted in grey and blue)

Lead the way, followed by a foursome

Bearing the palankeen on their shoulders

Now even the stragglers are out of view

I like the look of her hennaed hands

Gloats the bridegroom, as he glimpses

Her slim fingers gripping the palankeen's side

If only her face matches her hands,

And she gives me no mother-in-law problems,

I'll forgive her the cot and the trunk

And looking glass. Will the rain never stop?

It was my luck to get a pot licking wench.

Everything depends on the ferryman now.

It is dark in the palankeen, thinks the bride,

And the roof is leaking. Even my feet are wet.

Not a familiar face around me

As I peep through the curtains. I'm cold and scared.

The rain will ruin the cot, trunk and looking glass.

What sort of man is my husband?

They would hurry, but their feet are slipping,

And there is a swollen river to cross.

They might have given a bullock at least,

Grumbles the bridegroom's father; a couple of oxen

Would have come in handy at the next ploughing.

Instead, we are landed with

A cot, a tin trunk and a looking glass,

All the things that she will use!

Dear God, how the rain is coming down.

The silly girl's been licking too many pots.

I did not like the look of the river

When we crossed it this morning.

Come back before three, the ferryman said,

Or you'll not

Find me here. I hope

He waits. We are late by an hour,

Or perhaps two. But whoever heard

Of a marriage party arriving on time?

The light is poor, and the paths treacherous,

But it is the river I most of all fear.

Bridegroom and bride and parents and all,

The ferryman waits; he knows you will come

For there is no other way to cross,

And a wedding party always pays extra.

The river is rising, so quickly jump aboard

With your cot, tin trunk, and looking glass,

That the long homeward journey can begin.

Who has seen such a brown and angry river

R can find words for the way the ferry

Saws this way and that, and then disgorges

Its screaming load? The clarinet fills with water.

Oh what a consummation is here:

The father tossed on the horns of the waves,

And full thirty garlands are bobbing past

The bridegroom heaved on the heaving tide,

And in an eddy, among the willows downstream,

The coy bride is truly wedded at last.

The Stone-Chat

By Taufiq Rafat

The beautiful is beautiful anyway,

So why embellish it with words.

The eye, too long used to green

And fruitful movement, is parched

For a desert beneficence, seeking

Subtleties where none seem to exist.

For instance, in Jhelum's eroded hills

Where we have stopped for a moment to

Relieve ourselves. They always remind me

Of a village crone, too seamed and bedridden

To be of value, yet somehow lingering on,

Still spitting out the occasional proverb.

Surfeit has cloyed my vision. To understand

This waste, I must try and know myself

As I must once have been, and become,

And become, why even be...even

If I have to become ...that, that stone-chat there,

Almost lost against the no-color background.

I would have missed him, but for his tail

Vibrating with excitement. He hops up the slope,

Held in place by a slab of sunlight,

To a ridiculous terrace of wheat

Which does not seem worth the tending.

Once there, to burst into song. Never

Was anything so eager to survive!

Intolerant of excuse, he calls

This place home, has learnt to distinguish

Between the various shades of grey

Till the neighborhood is a riot of color,

And a ragged patch of wheat sufficient

Cause to be mellifluous about.

ZULFIQAR GHOSE: ATTACK ON SIALKOT

The Attack on Sialkot

Grandfather, eighty now, his pilgrimage

To Mecca over, still lives there, at peace

With his Muslim conscience. At our last meeting

He sat in the courtyard of a mosque, still

As an idol, while I stood outside, garish

As a poster against the whitewashed wail

In my mohair suit and corduroy hat,

Advertising my patient secularism.

Gunfire made Sialkot a kiln to fire

Pakistan's earthen-pot faith, I listened

To the news hour after hour the whole month

And saw maps in newspapers~ an arrow

Pointed at Sialkot. Grandfather's breast-plate

Of Islam had become fragile as china

In the intruding heresy of tanks.

I see that arrow still : aimed at grandfather.

It was a messy, a child's pudding-plate

Of a town during nay first seven years.

I pulled at grandfather's beard and dragged down
His turban when he carried me to school.

He turned five times a day to Mecca, bowed

Low in prayer and at night swung me round

The bed so that my feet did not insult

The holy direction, the one truth he knew.

From east and southeast the tanks, from the air

The jets converged all month on Sialkot

In a massive pilgrimage, bloodier than

The sacrifice of goats at the end of Ramadan.

Grandfather, the landmarks are falling, which

Way will you turn now? Islam, Islam, that's

All you cared for, stubborn as a child, while

I had gone westward, begun to eat pork.

Grandfather, if the old house falls, if you

Die where you built and Sialkot collapses~

I shall have no Mecca to turn to, who

Admire cathedrals for their architecture.

Religion is irrelevant to grief:

You will not agree~ nor will Pakistan~

Finding in this war the old Islamic

Pride rise like a congregation in a mosque.

A Dragonfly in the Sun by Zulfikar Ghose

The afternoon's light is caught

In the dragonfly's wings where

Transparency permits no reflections

And yet will not give free passage

To the sun, preserving the surface

The brightness of readers webbing

As a fragile brilliance of gleaming

Points which make the wings nearly

Invisible and the diagonal markings appear

As tiny irradiations of very faint

Pink and blue when the dragonfly

Darts up against the sun as if it

Plucked colors from the air

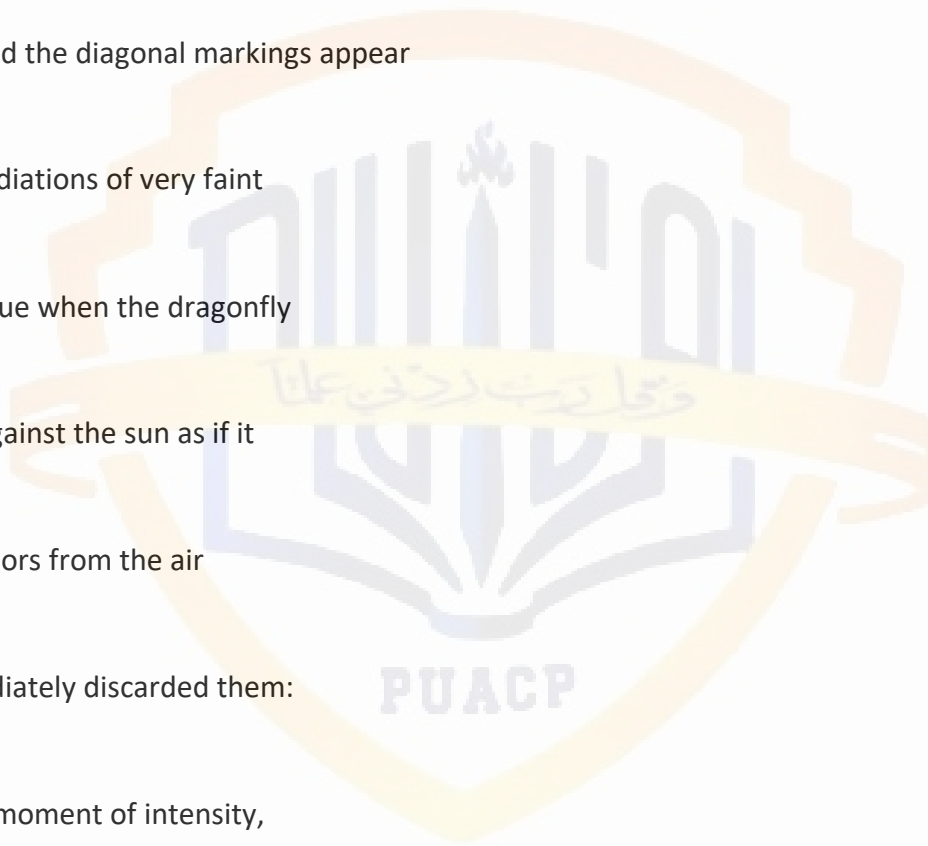
And immediately discarded them:

This is the moment of intensity,

Of the afternoon's light gathering

In the garden in a brief flickering

Of a dragonfly's wings just above



The red blossoms of the pomegranate

Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S

Friends,

Our dear sister

Is departing for foreign

In two three days,

And

We are meeting today

To wish her bon voyage.

You are all knowing, friends,

What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa.

I don't mean only external sweetness

But internal sweetness.

Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling

Even for no reason but simply because

She is feeling.

Miss Pushpa is coming

From very high family.

Her father was renowned advocate

In Bulsar or Surat,

I am not remembering now which place.

Surat? Ah, yes,

Once only I stayed in Surat

With family members

Of my uncle's very old friend-

His wife was cooking nicely...

That was long time ago.

Coming back to Miss Pushpa

She is most popular lady

With men also and ladies also.

Whenever I asked her to do anything,

She was saying, 'Just now only

I will do it.' That is showing

Good spirit. I am always

Appreciating the good spirit.

Pushpa Miss is never saying no.

Whatever I or anybody is asking

She is always saying yes,

And today she is going

To improve her prospect

And we are wishing her bon voyage.

Now I ask other speakers to speak

And afterwards Miss Pushpa

Will do summing up.

Maki Kureishi

Christmas letter to my sister

Each Year I decorate a Christmas tree

With trinkets from Bohri Bazar, Germany and Japan

You'll send home more from China And Korea to please my daughter

Each year I hang the glitter

Of our children up again

Mother kept our tree secret

Until Christmas Eve, when, doors were thrown down wide,

It started us a dour

cypress from the garden, now enchanted

bearing its fragile globes and stars like goblin fruit.

I use

A less dramatic Casurina pine

, as you plant spices in Cologne, but though

your backyard's fertile as a flower-pot.

They'll not grow native;

yet are native to the private landscape where we lived,

alien and homegrown.

Often As a Christmas treat the Raja sent

his official elephant. We were shipwrecked on.

When the haunches rose like a trial wave

we learned to brace and sway. Still practiced in equipoise

I teeter safe, and brace to my uncertainties

survive, Anglo-Indian as a dak bungalow

The Far Thing

A pine cone. Wide open. Brought from a northern holiday
to show my child. After a decade
in my drawer I should throw it away I suppose. A wood sculptured flower.

The final corolla guards stamens
still intact. It will grow in rain,
and a white air. Here in the desert's perpetual weather, it gestates a towering
conifer that will not happen.

The carved petals crown on crown, are lifted to no visible sun.

I put it back. It has like the
Bronzy charioteer, a readiness
, for the far thing. Monolithic as
a mountain pine, his wide gaze unfocused,
he waits at the beginning. Although the horses
have bolted and the chariot was dust
three thousand years ago,
he keeps a gamblers faith in his change of luck.

Sujhata Bhatt

A Different History

Great Pan is not dead;
He simply emigrated
To India.
Here, the gods roam freely,
Disguised as snakes or monkeys;
Every tree is sacred

And it is a sin

To be rude to a book.

It is a sin to shove a book aside

With your foot,

A sin to slam books down

Hard on a table,

A sin to toss one carelessly

Across a room.

You must learn how to turn the pages gently

Without disturbing Sarasvati,

Without offending the tree

From whose wood the paper was made.

2

Which language

Has not been the oppressor's tongue?

Which language

Truly meant to murder someone?

And how does it happen

That after the torture,

After the soul has been cropped

With a long scythe swooping out

Of the conqueror's face –

The unborn grandchildren

Grow to love that strange language

My daughter
when she was four
once described herself as a tiny egg, so small, she was inside me
at a time when I was still not born when I was still within her grandmother.
And so, she concluded triumphantly, I was also inside Aaji.

When she showed me her newest painting, she said:

At night the sun is black
and the moon turns yellow.
Look, that's how I painted it.
This is the sky at night
so the sun is also black.

What are the angels doing at night? It's not bad to die
because then you can become
an angel and you can fly and that's so nice
– I'll be happy to be an angel.

Later, I overheard her say to her father:

When I am a grandmother
I'll be very old
and you'll be dead.
But I hope you've learned
to fly by that time

Because then you can
fly over to my house
and watch me with my grandchildren

