

Ganesha-amma

*Ganesha-amma talk to me,
From the flesh of the dead
Kings made your image,
With blood of the living
Crimsoned your face,
Songs of curse
Sung in your name,
In waters of sorrow
Immersed your fame.*

*Ganesha-amma talk to me,
Do you not flow
In every drop of tear?
Do you not reach
In every scream of fear?
Do you not soothe
Every father's wrinkle?
Do you not hold
Every child's tremble?*

*Ganesha-amma talk to me,
Your glory blinds the fire
Your compassion feeds each fly
Your wisdom deeper than the ocean
Your love larger than the sky.
Why then do you not see
The agony of this mangled earth?
Ganesha-amma talk to me,
In this din I hear no other.*

Sitamata

*Wading through water
Walking through forests
Drenched in rain
Cut feet and torn saree.
Left alone to face
This market, that road
This angry, that lewd
This rare, kind word.
Where did her hair give
Way to deep wrinkles?
When did a young girl
Become a mother?
Sew a wedding blouse
Sell some pappads
Save on book covers
Clean some dishes?
Ten rupees per child
Lead them to the gate
Fourteen of the world,
Two of them her own
Did Raman see her thus?
Bent by fourteen bags
Sitamata take her
Luv and Kush to school?*

*I worship this mother
Bent by fourteen bags
Sayeeda takes her
Luv and Kush to school.
Janaka and little Janaki
No water on a Sunday
Neither electricity
Carried a bucket of water
Janaka and little Janaki.
To keep up with him
Her feet moved twice as fast.
Admission to school
A nightmare for the family
Interviewed the school teacher
Janaka and little Janaki.
Alphabet in three tongues
She recited twice as fast.
A self-contained flat
A doctor within the colony
Neighbours were kind
Janaka and little Janaki.
Shy at first but soon
She made friends twice as fast.
Different they were*

*Not in compassion nor piety
Not in love nor sorrow
Janaka and little Janaki.
Her mother wore the burqua
She forgot twice as fast.
Worship of a brick
A festival in the country
Watched from their window
Janaka and little Janaki.
At the burst of fire-crackers
Her heart beat twice as fast.
Found a new home
Less water, farther from the city
Another school and doctor
Janaka and little Janaki.
Safer to be with kith and kin
Her goodbye waved twice as fast.
Demons, nay humans, brought
Fire and scorched humanity
On every home there
Janaka and little Janaki.
I wonder, if they lived
Did her tears flow twice as fast?*

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