



BIBHU PADHI

# Journey Back

The evening was too innocent  
to take notice of the words;

I was innocent too  
until they sleepwalked

to their places  
far within my heart.

Memory of things is too short,  
is in fact forgotten easily.

My woman received them too,  
but she is wiser than me

and knows what to retain,  
what to forget.

But that evening,  
the innocuous *paan*-shop's transistor

was too far away  
for the exact words of the song.

Nimapada: I owe you

the wind-swept song.

# Beginning the Year

In the old time, the new year.  
Small promises rise up

to the swampy surface  
of the heart, float meekly  
on its thick waters.

Promises, filled with  
the future, of each

slighted soul even before  
it took its body.

Promises. Will the heart  
know which ones to choose  
in an act of delicate gathering at all?

# The Gate

It seems, somewhere, in California,  
it hangs loose, in need of nailing  
words, a long course of repairs.  
Even now, long after expert hands  
took notice of it in their  
five-fingered, precise lines.  
A gate opening to fictional voices,  
straining to be heard by men and gods,  
narrated with much laughter and anger  
in rhyming lines of unvarying lengths—  
forthright, complacent, cocksure.  
How can that gate allow our cold luck  
into the warmth of company, so far  
from us, so much unlike anything  
we've known till now—  
a creator's wish to be identified by  
what he creates from the white noise  
of San Francisco Bay, speaking to  
no one except a few, meaning nothing?  
We're told, they have built a story  
around the Gate, on a raised platform,  
so that the strutting figures could be seen  
for the first time along with their  
strident accents, now maturing into  
a sordid aggregate of venerable episodes.

*A tour de force. A masterpiece of the mind.*

The words from the dark balconies of praise  
are many, uttered in one breath, neglectful  
of life's humbler modes of extension, its  
darker announcements of paralysed fates.

Is there anywhere a voice of the heart, a word  
of consolation, a syllable of gentleness?

Let the Gate remain where it is, artfully anchored  
to its place by nails of praise. Let our failures  
float about it, find their unblemished places  
of sympathy, their lonely retreats into themselves.