

# **The Grand Inquisitor**

## **Shukra aka Morningstar (Mumbai, July 2012)**

He took me to a place  
hanging loosely in the stratosphere  
and he showed me the kingdoms of the earth  
in splendour, sealed with blood.  
But, he was only a shadow.  
He was not  
the Prince of Darkness  
and he didn't ask for my soul.

On this day in July,  
blood looms bigger  
than faith.  
My mustard seeds have lost their fragrance.  
They're scalded as if  
the mustard oil  
had been left unattended.

It is time to look for other flavours,  
says the earth,  
athelas, sanjivni, valerian root ...  
But something inside me whispers, even burnt mustard will  
suffice.

## **Katya and Grushenka (Mumbai, 2013/2014)**

Red velvet in my hands  
holding you in my heart  
until the end.

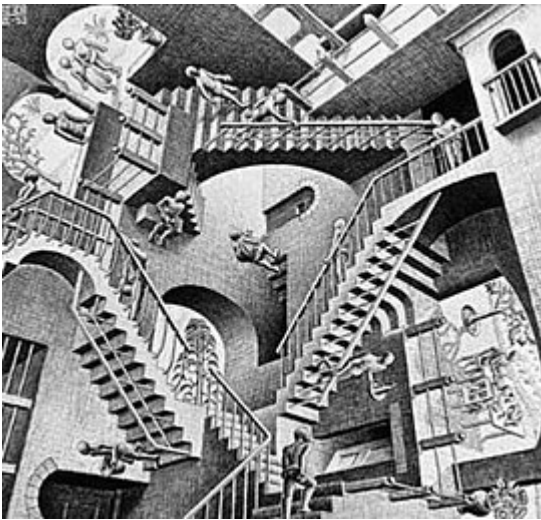
Unwoven strands of present  
tense, wasted, swirling.

In the basin of the night,  
the veiled Mistress  
smiles gently.

"Patience, my love."

They will find you  
when *their* time comes.  
You'll be ready  
red velvet in your hands.

## Strange Days (Mumbai 2013/2014)



She gave me an address  
and instructions  
on the way to get there  
but I was blindfolded  
a hand covering my eyes,  
my face,  
my mouth  
she had been there before  
it seems  
she seems  
confident of the path she takes  
strange loops of glamor  
underneath the full moon's light  
opening the trees like curtains  
in a well-rehearsed production  
scenes edited like history

delivered as only-begotten children  
once having entered  
must exit  
through ways predestined  
never to be born again  
anew.

## **And After All the Tea and Cakes and Ices (Patna, 2003)**

That's all, your Honour!  
no more witnesses today.  
The stars are dull.  
Look in my eyes  
every question wraps around my irises  
like a solenoid  
you are magnets, held  
to black pinpoints  
look, how you tremble  
locked inside your iron will.

Laugh with the Fool  
he has forgotten the Footman  
the settled dust of memory  
awaits the coming of a deeper night.

## **The Kiss – Heathcliff and Catherine (Mumbai, November 2014)**

A smog of memory breathes droplets  
shimmer in November's lamplight  
a million moths crawl across the chasm  
conversations thicken  
into zero watt serial patterns

Lips lock into lips  
Spirit locks in human  
Human twines into Spirit

Warp drive to Stars' End

He lives on  
Sowing bullet seeds  
The majesty of willing life-in-death  
Fusion  
in Absolute Zero

## **The Peasant's Verdict, Through a Glass Darkly (Mumbai, June 2007)**

An enemy  
is only a mirror  
that reflects  
a few stains  
on a dress that doesn't fit.  
Sometimes I snap the threads  
that seem to hold it together  
and there are times  
when it hangs so loosely  
that I am utterly shapeless  
an amorphous mess  
spreading out like something sticky  
into spaces where I dare not venture.

But when the bugle calls  
I look into the mirror  
and I fit myself  
into the soldier's uniform  
to give those stains  
a chance to belong.

That when my peace  
comes back to me  
I will not be distracted  
from my joy  
by those naive remarks  
that fall upon  
some stupid little stain.

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The references to *The Brothers Karamazov* (Fyodor Dostoyevsky) are too numerous to mention. *Strange Days* is a song by The Doors. The Footman and the cakes and tea and ices are taken from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot. *Stars' End* is a reference to the *Second Foundation* by Isaac Asimov. Heathcliff and Catherine are from *Wuthering Heights* (Emily Bronte). *Athelas* is from *The Lord of the The Rings* (J.R.R. Tolkien). The other references need not be cited because they fall well outside the purview of any copyright laws.