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.

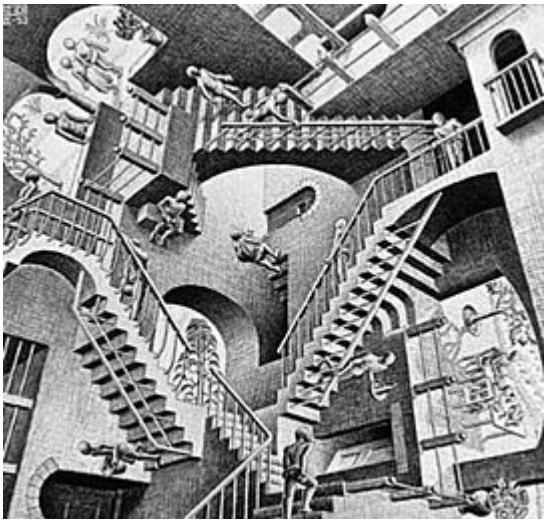
Unwoven strands of present
tense, wasted, swirling.

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.

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.