

Three poems by Sridhar Rajeswaran

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A Dialogue Between the Self and the Other

Her: Remind us again of

what was

The fifty odd years of dislocation

The great Divide

When the Mount with the Baton

Played half Solomon.

Tears, sweat, blood

Hunger, strife...

We are brain-dead

And passions rule the roost.

We are a country of impotent hypocrites

Unable to amalgamate the wealth

Of disparate experience...

We have chosen to divide.

The only freedom we hear

Is the decadent voice of a commercial.

Neo-colonialism aided by a

Willing suspension of disbelief.

A deadening of existence,

An annihilation of integrity,

A violation of senses,

Through a systematic misrepresentation

Of dreams

Him: You do not seem to do anything about it

Either. Your struggle, your cause,
Your work is disparate.
You do not subscribe to 'ideology'

Her: My work is Existential
It is part of the broader circle.
We negotiate Margins, Centers,
We comprehend 'difference'.

Historically no one fought our battles
There were no 'representations'
Voices were a consequence of –
Conspicuous, only through absence.

For over a millennium we have had
Our feet tied.
Now, we are a Community.
Race, caste, class and gender
Notwithstanding.

Woman's politics enables a vision
Of a more equal and less
Unjust world.
We have our Ideology
But no ideologues
No Icons.

 We are one, we are all.
We offer 'alternatives'...

 We try to see the finger
As a point of reference to the world
The one exists to prevent the negation of the other.

An Escape into the Mad House...

An escape into the mad house

By ten of them imperfect:

The first

Woman - Eve

Out to amend creation

Spared ribs for the pot of gruel

The second

Man - farmer

Ploughed season long

Labour sanctified wine dance and song

The third was love

Fetterless, sound, unbound

Floated free across

Rainbows and clouds

The fourth a stupid sharer

Knew no want before

Because gave away even what he needed

if he found the other's need greater

The fifth the committed worker

Plodded scoured and endeavoured

The whistle between his lips

And a song in his heart

The sixth was human suffering

dieting all day through

to vanish, to vanish, to vanish

vanity to the fore.

The seventh a dunce unwise
Teacher, philosopher, guide
Economic in disposition
Gluttony his foe.

The eighth one, space
Building dwelling thinking
Open and wide
Eating the apple to the core.

Nine the indomitable artist
Rooted on ground solid
History, self and collective
No more placebos to the soul.

The Perfect Ten
Woman - community
Relentless in pursuit
Stretching tireless striving

Toward a more equal
And a less unjust world.

Around
All were round circles,
Round moon, round sun
Full life, fuller community

Humanity riding a crest
On the wing of a wimpling wing

In their ecstasy they go forth on a swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:
They swoop and glide

Rebuffing the big wind.
My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, - the achievement, the mastery of the thing!
Within the walls, between the corridors
The angels sang of the new king born again.

But sound travelled
The paper kite rocket
Plunged head first
Into the damp squid din

And the rats came.
In swarms, in torrents
Wave after wave
Great rats, lean rats,

Grey old plodders gay young whiskers
Fathers, uncles, cousins
And drowned and drowned and drowned
The rich music lost in melodious guile.

The Mad house crumbled
Windows crumpled
Doors collapsed
And humanity was mouse-trapped.

They were led by the other ten -
Under written by the dollar
With guns and knives and those bits of paper,
Cavorting grasshoppers on a string

Waving flags, brandishing banners
The leaders and the damned.

And they levelled
And levelled and levelled
Until,
All was heat dust and destruction.

Rebirth: More Static than Words

The old man has done it again
Ordered his djinn to frustrate me.
My ordered world make
An incoherent cosmos.

My perceptions vary.
Foul-mouthed
I devour myself
Like his sow that devours her own.

Unable to immortalise muses
Unpossessed of the talent
That helps hear an ocean in a conch shell
I battle reckless seas

Twiddling swords to shame
The magic wand of innocence
Insouciance the sickening after taste.
And the scented breath transmogrified.

It is no more gentleness that bridges
Distances across acres of grass.
Life: now worn nonchalant
On the edge of a sleeve marks sway

With its palpable venom.
Unleashes the rustle of the viper
To trail images which question -

The need for memory.

From the present I need no memories.

What may be the remembrance?

But events that shall ceaselessly image for me,

In later moments of happiness

My own split and unageing self

That sought autonomy being denied agency?

A parrot raging at his own image in the enamelled sea

Refrains from peeling masks lest, the image frightens.

Rage and fear

Constant companions

Inveigling needs, dousing soporifics that deaden

Leadean dreams and leaden eyed despairs -

Inducing purposes to hallucinations

Structures to abstractions

Ferrying stone for the blinds man's bread

milking placebos to the soul.

The sow that eats her piglets

Her own that devour so

Wars that order chaos

And chaos has won order now.

Every order had his destruction

Will every other its other ?

In vain hope recompensed,

lies wailing frenetic in its earthy wisdom.

The age is not come about

Suffering not yet a badge
History mocks easy transfer of
One man's labour other men's food.

Four platoons in complete regalia
Four humours, four directions represent
The fifth in 'sense'
A secret gestapo.

England her dream made true
And now the Americanos come
Branding freedom stamps in hand,
For throat chemical concentrations.

Synthetic tastes fertile in imagination.
Chaos rules the roost.

The hour gone by
Clock time tolled eras of destitution.
Collieries that light visions of meaning
In unfathomable abbeys.

Echo-becoming,
Meaning lost in a complex muddle of jarring notes
To civilised humanity
Essensced in grovelling harmony.

Birds in the canneries
Brides in the nests
Liveried in misery,
Mystery veils the shroud.

Two hands to hold the neck
Two to pierce lips

Few drops of acid down the throat
A new parrot in its full- throated ease.

They broke away from the asylum
Ten of them, perfect:
One a hoarder now leader
Stealing pennies from a blind girl's bowl.

The second a dual vice
With knives and guns roams
Ushering in order, waving flags
In corridors where children go.

The third begins, middles and ends
In streets, states and doors
Bits of paper with heads of leaders
Valued at core.

The fourth was vice
And visceral in joy, abattoired human folk.
Drink and devil on a dead man's bum
Hey hey ho and a bottle of rum.

The fifth was neutral and scavenged
Spoils that needlessly
Go waste in a land of need-
Mercury and quick silver.

The sixth a priest of love
Who strung grasshoppers on a string
Enlivened divine Idée fixed
great thought, great action, good flow.

The seventh man was wise
The great spiritual saint
Enigmatic in action
For his left hand knew not his right.

The eighth was openly Satan
frontal as they come
Ravaged, maimed, and killed.
Population was his forte.

The ninth was the leveller
And he levelled, and levelled
And levelled until
All was dust, heat and destruction.

The tenth was the lord over-seer
Corporate head purloiner
Reigned supreme with iron hand
The dance of the wolf, the blood-moon days.

Around the round they fled
Great rats, lean rats, strong rats
Nibbling great mounds of flesh
O! for the humans in mouse traps.

Maddened by chaos,
Lost in the rectitude of a meaningless existence,
Wanting to liberate a reductive vision
They met. He and they,

In the sombre silence
Of sepulchral doom.

Beyond the moments-

Between the sheets
Of fluorescent glare
In the darkness of mournful glee

In the diatribe of seclusion -
They huddled close
Hung tight in the current
Of cuddly warmth he, they and liberty.

Eight O' clock and sedatives
Noon and a pot of gruel
Psychiatrists and dreadful monotones
Love that is pitched in excrement.

Hypnopaedia and mind bending
Impelling force through ductile medicines
Tactility, gauze-worn cottoned tongue
Speech, poor poll.

They lived their chosen nightmare
Feigned innocent converts
Then furrowed, plotted, pieced
Land small, but space their own.