

## **Mango Blossoms**

This spring I did not bemoan  
the Paradise lost  
I awaited mango blossoms  
I tasted many times  
the delicious juice  
that summer would bring

I empathize with conquerors  
who came to search for  
this fruit in a distant land  
Ideally it should have been  
the forbidden fruit of paradise  
that Eve gave to Adam

This spring I passed  
mango groves that scent  
the air and I did yearn  
for the trees lost  
forever to the city  
I thought of a mango grove  
near Samrala town  
where I went once  
looking for a poet  
called Lal Singh Dil\*  
This spring I liberated  
my dead and  
celebrated the living  
This spring I awaited  
mango blossoms and  
Paradise was regained

\* A celebrated Dalit (oppressed caste) poet of Punjab who died in penury.

## The Blue Muffler

The blue muffler has an  
uncanny knack  
of turning up in my life  
now and again

Years ago, in an Odeon  
cinema morning show  
Gulzar's\* lilting lyrics break  
the silence  
Spotting love in the fragrance of eyes,  
my eyes spill tears  
He takes off his blue muffler  
and places it in my hands  
to sob into  
My first touch with  
the blue muffler

Years later another blue muffler  
in the windy auto-rickshaw ride  
on a cold winter's night  
from his *barsati* to mine--  
he unwinds it from  
his neck and ties it like  
a scarf over my flying hair  
My second touch with  
the blue muffler

And now in the awkward moment  
of adieu, we stand avoiding  
a word or a glance  
I put my arm around his neck  
and before I know it, I have  
muffled a kiss  
into the blue muffler  
and he returns one into the  
green stole round my neck  
I know somehow it is  
my last touch with  
the blue muffler

[Translated from Punjabi by the poet]

\* Gulzar a famous romantic poet and filmmaker of India

## **Forgiveness**

I seek forgiveness of  
all those women  
from whom  
I stole a moment or two  
of sunshine  
This petty theft of mine  
bothered them much,  
made them stay awake  
many a night

We women are so scared  
of the pitch dark  
that we reach out to  
one another's share  
of sunshine  
and bring back  
a simmering ray or two  
to trim the edges of  
the dark veil of night,  
always leaving the sun intact

I forgive all those women  
who stole from me  
a moment or two  
of my share of sunshine

[Translated from Punjabi by the poet]