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Selected Poems

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Acknowledgements
Nirupama Dutt is a poet writing in Punjabi. She is also a well-known translator from Punjabi into English. Her translation of revolutionary Punjabi poet Lal Singh Dil and an anthology of Punjabi short stories are published by Penguin. Nirupama lives in Chandigarh, where she also works as a journalist. Sarabjeet Garcha is a bilingual poet writing in English and Hindi. He translates from Hindi and Marathi into English. He has published three collections of poems in English and participated in various literature festivals. Sarabjeet lives in Delhi.

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केशव अनुरागी

यह ढोल एक समुद्र है साहब केशव अनुरागी कहता था
इसके बीससंतती ताल हैं सैकड़ों सबद
और कई तो मर-खप गये हमारे पुरखों की ही तरह
फरी भी है संसार में आने और जाने अलग-अलग ताल साल
शुरू हो या पूछल खरिल तो उसके भी अलग
ब्रजाल के आप-आपे चलती इसकी महत्व आवाज
चढ़ाई उतराई और बलियाम के अलग बोल
और चढ़ाई बहंडू बोल गुरह और जागर के वे गुढ़ सबद
जिन्हें सुनकर खेड़ और परवत भी सुनते हैं अपनी-अपनी जगह
जीवन के उत्तर सबद इसकी आवाज के बलिया जीवनहीन
यह जगतना बाहर बजता है उतना अपने भीतर भी
एक पाखे से फूटते बोल सुनकर बज उठता है दूसरे पाखे का कोई ढोल
बताता उस तरफ के हालचाल
देवताओं को नीद से जगाकर मनुष्य जातियों शामलि करता है
यह काल के बलिया परदे को बजाता हुआ
और जब कोई इस संसार से जाता है
तो मृत्यु का कातर ढोल सुनाई देता है

लोग कहते हैं केशव अनुरागी ढोल के भीतर रहता है
ढोल सागर के मूल-बसिये तालों को छोटे-बड़े बाला बजाते गये
जो कुछ समय कुमार गंधर्व की संगीत में भी रहा
गंधर्व के गीतों को जसिने पहुंचाया शास्त्रीय आवाज में लिखा
उन्होंने प्रतिभा के समुद्र राख में धमकाता
आश्रय के घर जहां हमारी यह संसार का पंडित्त
और जब वह धोड़ी पी लेता तो ढोल के तालों खेलता हुआ गदौर
कहता सुनाई यह बादलों के पान
और यह रही पानी की पहाड़ी की बालम बूंद का
यह पुड़पार यह श्रातम बारा
यह बहने लगी नदी
यह बन एक सागर विसी रंगकृती गुंजायमान
लेकिन में सूई-अचूक कोन कहे गुड़े कताकार
कुल ही करना होगा
आजीवन पायलाग महाराज जग्ज हो सरकार

बनना शिय्या का गुड़, केशव अनुरागी
नने में धुत खुशता था एक धर्मसंसैंहीन ढोल के बोल
किसी ने नहीं अपनायी उसकी कला
अनछपा रहा वर्षों की साधना का ढोल सामर
इस बीच ढोल भी बन गया हमारे गांवों में
कुछ फूट गये कुछ पर युग सूर्ख नहीं लगी
उनके कई बाजगर दूसरे धंधों की खोज में चले गये
केशव अनुरागी
मदहोश आकाशवाणी नजीबाबाद की एक कुर्सी पर
debars pāndav nṛitya and jāgar hearing which
when someone departs from this world
the dismal ḍhol of death is heard
people used to say that Keshav Anuragi lived inside the ḍhol
He was a peerless singer searching for forgotten strains
of the ḍhol Sāgar who also spent some time
in the company of Kumar Gandharva
who propelled the songs of Garhwal to classical dimensions
His talent astonished one and all
How was this master of music born in an outcaste family?
And when he was slightly drunk he would play
with the beats of the ḍhol as if they were a ball
He would say Listen up this is the roll of thunder
and here is the first soft drop of water
here comes pounding rain
here a river starts flowing
here forms a vast ocean and the resounding nature
But I am an untouchable. Who would call me an artist?
All my life I alone will have to genuflect
and say I touch your feet, Maharaj
Hail, my lord
When properly sozzled
Keshav Anuragi the guru without a disciple
would make us listen
to the sounds of a futureless drum

Translation of the poem ‘Keshav Anuragi’
by Sarabjeet Garcha

This ḍhol is an ocean, sir, Keshav Anuragi used to say
It has tens of beats hundreds of percussions
most of which have perished just like our ancestors
Even then the beats for coming into
and going out of this world are distinct
So too those for the time when the year
begins or when flowers bloom
Its deep sound preceding the marriage procession
its diverse thumps for ascent descent and pause
and those abstruse beats for jhorā, chācharī,
and jāgar hearing which
even the trees and the mountains sway
in their individual places
All of life’s festivities are lifeless without its sound
It thumps with the same intensity within
as it does without
Hearing the sounds erupting from one hill slope

a drum on the other beats too
and tells about the state of things there
Beating the enormous tympanum of Time
it rouses gods from sleep and
assimilates them into humankind
and when someone departs from this world
calling people from far away to
join in the funeral

People used to say that Keshav Anuragi lived inside the ḍhol
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would make us listen
to the sounds of a futureless drum
Nobody made his art their own
Written after many years of devoted practice
Ḍhol Sāgar\(^1\) never saw the light of day
In the meantime the ḍhols in our villages began to dwindle
Some burst and some didn’t get new skin stretched onto them
Many of the players went away in search of new vocations
The inebriated Keshav Anuragi remained slumped in a chair at All India Radio, Najibabad
One day he became alarmed to see that he existed
One day his foot stuck in mud
He unawares ran into someone on the street
One day he broke out of the ḍhol of humans and gods
He now lives inside the ḍhol of death

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\(^1\) Keshav Anuragi’s unpublished manuscript on the art of the ḍhol.

Rāg Durgā
A memory of listening to this rāg sung by Bhimsen Joshi

राग दुर्गा
(भीमसेन जोशी के गाये इस राग को सुनने की एक स्मृति)

एक संगीत उस समय तक जाता था जब-जब चमकते दुखिले थे उसके पत्थर जंगल में घास काटनी सहजताओं के गीत पानी की तरह बहकर आ रहे थे कस्सी चटनी के नीचे बैठी चढ़ियां अचानक अपनी आवाज से चाँदका जारी थी दूर कोई लड़का बांसुरी पर बजाता था वैसे ही स्वर एक पेड़ कोने में सहिरला खड़ा था कमरे में थे मेरे पति अपनी युवावस्था में गाते संगीतियों रूप-रूप कहते इसे गाने से जल्दी बढ़ती है घास

सरलता से बुकत होता रहा एक कठिन जीवन वहाँ छोटे-छोटे आकार थे बच्चों के बनाए हुए खेल-खिलौने घर-घर आँखें जैसी खिड़कियाँ मैंने उनके भीतर जाने की कोशिश की देर तक उस संगीत में खोजता रहा कुछ जैसे वह संगीत भी कुछ खोजता था अपने से बाहर कस्सी को पुकारता कस्सी आलगमिन के लिए बढ़ता बीच-बीच में घुमड़ता उठता था हार्मोनियम तबले के भीतर से आती थी पृथवी की आवाज

वह राग दुर्गा थे यह मुझे बाद में पता चला जब सब कुछ कठोर था और सरलता नहीं थी जब आखिरी पेड़ भी ओँझ घों नों में को था और मैं जगह-जगह भटकता था सोचता हुआ वह क्या था
Translation of the poem ‘Rāg Durgā’
by Sarabjeet Garcha

A path went up to that civilisation
its pebbles could be seen glittering all over
the songs of the women cutting grass in the forest
were gushing forth like water
a sparrow sitting under a rock would startle
with its call and fly away
far off in the distance some boy used to play
the selfsame notes on a flute
a tree in a corner stood quivering
in the room was my father in his
youth singing Sakhi Morī Rūm-Jhūm
he used to say this song makes grass grow faster

and stepping forward for an embrace
now and then the notes of the harmonium swirled
from inside the tabla rose the sound of the earth

that it was Rāg Durgā I came to know later
when everything was callous and there was no simplicity
when even the last tree was on the verge of dimming away
and I rambled here and there thinking what it was
that did not come to mind and
whose absence did not cause pain
only then did I hear Rāg Durgā
floating like the relics of a civilisation
I moved on towards it
its ascending scale rising like grass
and descending scale flowing like water
**Gunanand Pathik**

**गुणानंद पथिक**

In just a glance one could fathom the whole life of Gunanand Pathik

Many must have seen him on the main road of the decaying Tehri town, entering the bus stand in a wave of musical notes

The old harmonium hung from his neck pamphlets of his songs in his shoulder bag that he sold first for a quarter of rupee and later for a half.

Gunanand Pathik used to sing songs spelling change for the mountains calling out to the village folk to wake up for with them would awaken the still mountains he would sing songs that told the difference between the rich and the poor.
Listening to him
people would forget the toffees and lemon drops
buy his book of songs and read it
on the bus journey back home.

Gunanand Pathik had composed his songs
to the tunes of the women’s folk songs
as though all joy lay in changing the old into the new
Many learnt from him first lesson of music
His voice was heard at the Ramila
and people would know that these notes were
made by their musical craftsman
who knew not just to sing a raga
but even change it
With his songs began all the Communist Party rallies
from Dehradun to Tehri to Pauri
travelled his little dream always.

He knew not that something was changing around him
or that something had refused to change
Many new musical instruments resounded
in the mountains
Money was making its own music and
half a rupee became more powerful than
the book of songs
the Communist Party got big loudspeakers
A dam came up on the Bhagirathi in Tehri
Gunanand kept singing the old song
This was the last glimpse of his life
then his voice started growing faint
the notes of the musical instrument were lost
he started forgetting the songs
he had himself written and composed

The leftover Communists kept planning
a big reception to honour him
But Gunanand Pathik had given up his harmonium by then
and people had forgotten him like they forget a folk song.

Manglesh Dabral is a poet, journalist and translator. He is the author of five collections of poems, two collections of literary essays and sociocultural commentary, and a book of conversations. He also published a travel account of his experiences in the USA, where he resided for three months as a University of Iowa International Writing Program Fellow in 1991. His poems have been widely translated, and a selection from his collection, This Number Does Not Exist, was published by Poetrywala in India and BOA Editions, Rochester, New York. He has participated in numerous poetry festivals in India and Europe, and one of his poems was engraved at the entrance door of the city centre in Eislingen, Germany.

Nirupama Dutt is a poet writing in Punjabi. She is also a well-known translator from Punjabi into English. Her translation of revolutionary Punjabi poet Lal Singh Dil and an anthology of Punjabi short stories are published by Penguin. Nirupama lives in Chandigarh, where she also works as a journalist.

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