

Rescued Pages of War-Sense

TARUN BHARTIYA

1.

Curious, these death wishes
Lurking in barren mountains.
Sometimes in the valleys of Sohra,¹
Sometimes on my TV set,
I sniff in the breath of reporters
The reality of gunpowder.

2.

In the First World War
As narrated by Commando Comics,
The eyes of the enemy sketch out
Our eyes, meaning they
Sketch out the enemy.

3

Whereas the Jewish trader of Addis Ababa
Searches for Herat, and I for enemies.

4

War poetry
Should be composed inside homes,
While sipping tea, craving cigarettes,
Busy discussing the
Proper use of Kabul's *heeng*.²
The need for war should be discovered at leisure.

When Mr. Mahanta, the neighbour, laughs
At this arm-chair poetry of war,
He should be invited to smuggle
The pictures of B-52,
Then, to raise money for the Museum of Strategies.



We should establish
An Abhimanyu Fund.

Can you find a better place than the border,
To deceive lovers
Who continue to sulk
As you examine the cures for betrayal?
War poetry should be composed to complete
The verse
Of romance-tempered gardens.



Let the great poets
Receive the mysteries of composing epics
From secret sources.
I won't challenge them.

If
That six feet three inches tall pilot
Forgets to shut his cockpit
Busy dreaming of
Your epic heroines.
War poetry must not be real.
There must live possible impurities
In fables.

5
He must be my age,
That pilot.
Querying from his window
Mathematical tables of nineteen
And the personal geography of Persia.

6
Mr. Rana's lecture on the "Need of Enemies" had just ended,
And I saw excited news anchors belching.

7
One has to shelter for the night
In a world like this
And wait every morning
For couriers from the border.
In the tunnels of their bags
Rumours crawl, whispering,
Opening the windows of neighbours.

8
And this is the fresh century.
Cultural good lies
In the antiquity of mediums.
For example this Photograph,
The moment you saw it, you said, "This is our tradition".
Because in it someone speechifies
Pricing potatoes in New York
As if in Kabul.
It is true that this city has a right to be
Absent
And one knows what enemies are like.
They are rats, nibbling through a *halaal* darkness
To find salt.

Even to steal a glance at these enemies is to
Destroy civilisation.
That is to say, the invisible frontiers of B-2,
Beyond the shadow of the camera
In our dreams,
And children with GI Joe in their
Hands.

You are welcome to this century of flat truths.
Welcome!
Would you eat Mughlai Meat?
Even Bush relishes Mughlai Meat.

NOTES

1. Sohra, Khasi name for Cherrapunji, known as a place which is said to receive the highest amount of rain in the world. Just about fifty kilometres from where I live.
2. Asafoetida.

Translated from Hindi by the author.



DEEP
Instabilities