**Poetry Series**

# Jagannath rao Adukuri

## - poems -

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## A blade of grass

I cannot focus awareness on the winding road
The distant hill is covered in a blue haze
There is all-around oblivion felt in my unbeing
Only the other day I was a blade of grass
Today I cannot wave in the mountain breeze
Uprooted from my mother I do not know my being
Just like that hill covered in a haze of forgetfulness.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## A boat trip on the Ganges in Calcutta

At nightfall the pretty Ganges wore
A black sequined satin dress and
A splendid necklace studded with
Candle-like lights on the bridge
The flickering flame of the lantern
In the boat refused to dance
To the passing wind’s death-tune
Near the jetty stood a  monstrosity
Brooding over its illumined loneliness
And its cavernous stomach ached with
The darkest secrets of the high seas.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**A day at the training academy**

The trouble arose out of needless self-knowledge
The organism recoiled even on gentle pin-pricks
Here goggle-eyed girls touched tender spots
A phallic water-tank towered, Shiva-like,
Over the stony portals of glorified knowledge
A shrill sea-gull-cry vaporized as rain-cloud
Another morning bird fanned the garden air
My glass eye lost the bee in floral confusion
There was this gently smiling anaconda in the hall
There were no beauty-tokens, only tattered egos.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## A doctor's marriage

A nose-sniffing doctor marries a doctor.
We are listening to the wedding chatter
As though we are on the operation table
And consequently, are in an extended dream.
The sounds of the chatter reach the ceiling
And come down to meet us on our plastic chairs
In a steady stream of indistinguishable buzz.

The nose-sniffing doctor sits on the stage
With the non-nose-sniffing doctor behind a curtain
A middleman priest calls down gods in Sanskrit.

We are in a morphine-induced dream lying
On an operation table undergoing surgery.
Our nose-sniffing man has sent us in our dream
He is sitting by the side reading Kamasutra.
But actually he is going through strange motions
With the non-nose-sniffing doctor who is his bride.
The middleman priest is invoking gods for him
Making him circle the smoking fire seven times.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**A night in the Topslip forest**

All through the stillness of the night
The wind howled in the bamboo clump
The bamboo bushes danced in rapture
In the inky darkness our searchlight beamed
On  shadowy forms of  giant-sized bison
Their luminous eyes stared in unconcern
The creatures of the wild refused to appear
A night safari was just not their idea of fun.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**A photographer’s “doggereal”**

A breeze blows on the fallen leaves,
Soft- crunching under footfalls
Then thoughts flow in a pageant
Their slowly crawling centipede
Is so much like a human chain
Their poetry exists in fine words,
Their rhythms beating as in life
Their symmetry really pretty.
Beauty-words gently fall like
December mist dripping from leaves.
Our own transience feels like birds
In the blueness above the treetops.
In the summer sky’s blue torpor
We keep stretching our vision
Until tiny luminous worms swim
In pools of tears in raised eyes.
Here, a dog becomes a mere image
On the rock where it belongs,
In joyful photo-luminescence.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**A photographer’s quest**

The city lay crumpled in a quiet corner
The evening smelt onion-peels and roast
The sun slid below an unfinished house
The white ghosts had still time to return.
Pulse-beating hearts, thought-abhorrent,
Beat in the very depths of their rib-cages
In onrush of blood and oxygen-seekings.
At the other end of the beauty-spectrum
Several transformations worked technically
In coloured copies of quintessentialities.
A few frames mattered and horizons’ tilts
The artist looked for exactnesses of science
Capillary details appealed to beauty-logic.
You know how we seek ghosts in quiet time.
Our graphic eye sought the nature of things
In white balances and still phosphorescences.
Beauty eluded while pursuing pixel- perfection.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**A train journey**

Then our world moved away slowly under our feet;
A barebacked child mopped the floor under our seats
A fifty -paise coin glistened in his hungry eyes
Like the broken sun found in the muddy puddle
That had formed in yesterday’s wind and rain.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**A visit to Nagalapuram temple**

The clarinet blows
And the cymbals beat
The images of another world,
In time, larger than life,
Of a king and his mother
Flit before me like
Giant specters from
A misty alien land.

A magical man-mother-God
Continuum flows through
My willing heart and flows on.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**A warehouse prince broke her horn**

She just does not sit around doing nothing, night and morn
Look at her glass menagerie of animals, cute and unique-born
Take a look at the silver-glowed unicorn with his pretty horn
A prince from the warehouse comes riding into her life forlorn
It is this warehouse prince who breaks the horn, her poor unicorn
Strangely she does not mind it- we mean this loss of unique horn.

(The Glass Menagerie by Tennesse Williams)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Aasha's painting**

First there was chaos
Beauty eluded us
Lacking symmetry
Our sense of place
Being truly atrocious.
A pristine female form
Appeared from the blue;
Then another, close.
A shadowy dark form
An unmistakable scramble
For crystalline knowledge
Neatly bound volumes
Quickly to be crossed over.
A necessary crossing over
Into the world of the dead
A demolition of order
Then emerged  Beauty
Leaving us breathless.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Acceptance**

The body had struggled for a whole night
Calling for a tranquil, unquestioning acceptance
A typhoon in the intestines caused the mind to swirl
In a smelly rejection across the car seat
In the acceptance lay the complementarity of rejection
Then the rain went musical on the misty windshield
Beauty appeared, in wistful rain, across time
As though it were life briefly rejecting death
Buddha sat there smiling in Time’s burnt earth
There was no acceptance or rejection, only beauty.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Adultery**

His bony fingers
Wrought such fine music
Out of my rosy-hued body
In the warm summer nights
I steal another's man
Our sweaty union goes on
Under drawn curtains
And smothered lamps.
Waves of tiny ants crawl
Under the burning skin
This pathetic creature
Wants me to whisper
Love-words in his ears
I cannot do so because
The magic of my body
Belongs to me alone.

I look in the mirror
I have gone through this all
The creaking door,
The noise of the flesh
The in-between small talk,
It is so painfully boring.

This wretched body
A bag of hungry bones
And aching tissue remains
As yearning as ever.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Airborne**

Yesterday is not felt now
He that touched the core
Could feel it in the clouds
The trees were mere vapor
The breeze touched the treetop
The leaves rustled gently
The rocks were cream-colored
A boy rose out of the tree
A mere speck of experience
A dot on white consciousness
Another stood on a stick
One more image tucked away
It did not matter what, when.
Consciousness streamed forth
In sleep and in wakefulness
Sometimes I do not remember
History of the mind, of the body
I recount experiences in a haze
Their chronology in a heap.
Today is another matter
Frail bodies floated in the air
They were the essence of things
A fuselage is in the making
The yellow bird will soon take off
But, alas, thirty percent weight is fuel
As we enter the sunset zone
Its elfish lightness will go down.
It will become a vaporous entity
Of tomorrow’s yesterday.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Alive in a train**

It poured in bunches, quickening
Acacias that needed no quickening
Once in the train I cogitate on
Fevered awareness in my skin-pores
A youth makes small-talk over chicken-rice
Aliveness eats aliveness, recently dead,
I withdraw in pretended disinterest
And submit to forced sedation
Let eyelids fall smooth and unaware
Followed by forced ceasing of being
Like that piece of once-aliveness
Unkicking in an alive stomach
A griping baby howls awareness
Then thick curtains fall over the train berth
Today and I have both ceased.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**An October Morning**

Here, in October, scores of dragonflies
Fly about like miniature airplanes
Speckled butterflies collide with them
Floating in the air like catamarans
The morning slowly dries wet clothes,
Dripping, they smell of blue detergent
The house there wakes up bleary-eyed
Hesitating shadows emerge from the walls
A varnished gate, the midget of a woman
On the concrete bench, in the garden
Measuring the length of her shadow
A riot of bougainvillea bursts on the rock
Like a Chinese vase with fresh geraniums
Fresh coffee drip-drops in the percolator
Filling the air with delicious aroma
Amid all the blood and gore of newsprint
Soon you drift into a crimson forgetfulness.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Ashes**

The drama continued
The words were spoken
From the guttural depths
Of a middleman’s throat
And washed by drops
Of sanctified water.
The pursuit of silver
Went on in the waters
With sonorous words
Chasing multitudes of
Life-death shadows
The waters flowed silently
Over the rocks nurturing life
And its golden-brown ashes.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At Sriperumbudur, The birthplace of Ramanujacharya**

What floated idly in our dreams
Incorporated our liquid selves,
Quickly, into its fluffy cotton clouds.
We are not we of our dreams
But just fleeting fragments of light
That roamed the silent inky night.

The luminous red-and-white chalk-lines
On our profoundly furrowed foreheads
Extended, over our tenement tops and temple towers,
Into an anarchic aggregation of scriptural argument
The truth lay, mainly, not in monistic oneness,
Not even in the dualistic separateness
But in the fiery union of the flesh with the spirit.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At the Balaji temple, Bhopal**

The moon fluttered atop God’s flagpole
A thousand oil lamps smelling God
Scattered birds in the tree’s darkness.

(At the Balaji temple, Bhopal on a Full Moon day)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At the death ceremony of a relative in Eluru**

Trains bring people to river canals
Where death is a mere after-fact
Submerged in flowing green waters.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At the Grand Hotel in Kolkata**

The morning crystallizes
Pure and silver.
The moment swells
To an iridescent event
Amid outcry of cutlery
And bone-clatter of china
Sparrow-love on the lawns
Aromatic hotel smells.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At the house of  Tamil poet Subramania Bharati**

There were no shadows on the walls
Only a tall silhouette
A beturbanned, deep-thoated poet.

His songs had spilled over
Into his countrymen's hearts
Like Tampraparni in spate
An elephant, not the colonial power,
Cut off his sonorous voice
Poets shall die young.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At the Jehan Numa hotel in Bhopal**

In yesterday’s laughing wind and rain
The trees waved helplessly on my window
A spiritual lady separated my spirit
From my morbid mind, body and intellect
Buffeted by a moist wind-blown illness
In this history room the royals reveled
Separated by sunless fog-screens of time
The wind howled all through the night
My consciousness grappled with the body.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At the Kapady beach in Kerala**

Thought heralded a boatful of laughter
Checkered, courageous, fishermanly
In spray-powdered, sprinkle-diffused
Froth seething with salt and blue
As though the sea horizon heaved
In musically multi-colored sound
Steeped in dead-dry- fish smell.
A boy walked away from the sea-sun
And idly prancing about crows.
Vasco Da Gama’s stone tablet stood
In history’s powdered rock and sand
And broken -colored boat masts.
At the corner glistened wet sand
In tree shadows falling in sea
Their dark hair hiding red agenda.
These white buildings sat idly
In history’s tiled canopies witnessing
Communism’s capitalist fortunes.
The French windows hid much beauty
In the shadows of mosquito nets
While hot pepper creepers snaked
All the way up the statuesque teaks.
In the slush coconuts proudly stood
Spreading dark hair in the night.
Here, rain happened quickly
Rocking moist coconut fronds
Hiding still, hairless sea-eagles.

(A poem which happened on the Kapady beach in Kerala)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At the memorial forest for the departed**

We looked for her in a revived memory
In the greenness of the memorial forest.
A young mango tree flourishes for her
In the vast dome of the academy's sky.
The boy-keeper says it is fine and green-
At the corner the monkey-God is waiting
To be housed in a reddish-tinged temple
Along with the Goddess with extended tongue.
Here my mom shall flourish in good company
Soon there will be green mangoes hanging
Alongside the morning sun and silver rain
And tiny vivid birds heaving, on its branches,
Their bodies filled with sweetness and song.

(We had planted a mango tree in a Memorial forest in Bhopal in my mother's memory)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**At the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore's house in Kolkata**

In a dim-lit corner of this red house,
I looked her in the eye, intensely
Below the unswept wooden staircase
She stands naked, under the shadows,
Her gaze intently fixed on the far line
Between the expectant emerald earth
And a translucent moistureless May sky.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Be**

The flowers spoke nothing
They waited patiently
For indifferent lovers.
Their rainbow colors
Briefly touched
The edge of the sky.

Their existence, however real,
Was close-ended
Being trapped in the sun.
Drinking moon-beams
As birds in the higher zones do
They want to be.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Bear**

When you bear-hug darkness
You do not see bears from bushes
And where the earth ends
And the dark of the sky begins.
Your bicycle balance fails  and
There is white fear in your bones
And you do not see the bear
Only the whiteness of its teeth.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Beauty is not truth**

The sun pours through every leaf
Playing shadows on the white wall
As red-and-white temples ring bells
The banyan rises from colored plastics
In warm yellow light and water shades.
Yesterday's eye-red was but a phase
Having lost the moonlight all the way
Behind large doors and khaki authority
(When we pray in marble mosques
We tend to get killed on Fridays
Because beauty does not really matter
But only the blood-red duty-call)
In the end we see where the king went
In the cold cellar, past earthly beauty
The priest's God-call pierced the vault
As beauty is not truth, only coldness.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Beauty-tokens**

I remember the first cataclysm
When it had fortuitously happened
In the green sea of nothingness
When there were no words
There was all-around green fluid
My breathing was slow and rhythmic
My reaching out was tentative
Now again it is spasmodic, yelling
I want to reach out, my palms
Cupped in clumsy supplication
Then I did not ask to be born
As a mere chemical experiment
I do not want now to cease to exist
Merely as another cosmic event
Leaving a trail of fluorescent words
Tell me quickly what I shall do
With all these pretty astral pieces
I have been garnering all these days.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Beauty-waves from Guruvaiyoor**

Beauty-desire, succulent, ripened quickly;
The astute spirit-being violently reacted within.
The fevered body hated to be a whipping boy.
Arjuna’s friend had told him contrary things
Leaving us all befuddled, our minds giddy.
Nachiketa had asked death what it was and why.
Of course, knowledge was death before and after.
Now this beauty-thing, was it a physical glow
Or a spirit-layer, eternal and in the clouds.
Look at this beyond-thing, this horizonlessness.
At this the Godchild seemed to smile exquisitely
His beauty-waves reached our perplexed minds
From beyond the coconuts and tiled houses.
My own beauty- pixels vanished, wholly washed off
Their incandescence dissipated in space above
Clusters of coconuts and houses nestled in them.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Black and white dreams**

Morning is brown tea and Charles Bukowski-
You live in fear of their fears says he.
I dream of my house and sun on balcony
Built near the lake, blue and crystalline
Trees in the streets, morning bird tweets.
These municipal guys make house maps
While we all take our afternoon naps
Then we make 36 feet houses against 10
Approved by the municipal engineer guys
And live in of fear of their midnight knocks.
There in the crematorium I need just 5
And the municipal guys also need a mere 5
And may be, some dry logs obtained cheap
From the sidewalk vendor without bill-
After all it is the logs that burn better than
Wood shavings and discarded old furniture
With rusty nails jutting out into night air.
In the meanwhile there is this driver's drama
When he gets into train to see ailing dad
He hears dad already dead of too much sugar
And look, death is so sweet and so prosaic!
A black man makes the white house white
In news black and white, Obama and his ma
With Moslem middle name, properly baptized
Spare him from possible theological dilemma.
I have several black and white 'flickr' dreams
Nobody touches them because they are
Just my black and white dreams, not theirs
And it is the colored ones they are after.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Borra Caves**

I must re-experience their freedom
It is as though I was there the other day
Only they have grown bigger and taller
And their inner spaces more cavernous.
Remember, I tried writing pretty pictures
On their scraggy walls in several stunning hues
To celebrate the leafy arrivals of the silver oak
And the jack fruits sitting heavily on the barks
Nothing much has changed since.
I drew such lovely pictures of charging bison
Our tribeswomen danced dimsa all night long
As we drank cup after cup of palm wine
And the dappu beat in a rising frenzy.
Millions of years ago I saw this very mountain
Gurgling to form a gigantic gas bubble
This very bubble has hidden all the parchments
Of my dearest ancestors' glorious history
They all went beyond the mountains
Never again to return to our land.
But I can still see their dark specters
In the cavernous womb of this mountain
Clinging to the moss-laden roof upside down
They shrieked out the secrets of the other-world
And of life beyond the mountain-peaks
That piled, one on the other, on a sunny day

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Break**

Break is what touches metal
And nerves and mental state.
Break is sound and disconnect
From life and living and love.
Break is midnight and strange
Huge buses cutting down life.
Break is not another morning.

(Upon hearing the death by accident of the business partner of my neighbor)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Breeze**

The banyan's shadows played
With yesterday’s leaves
The words were leaves
My shadows played with.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Broken images**

At eleven, beauty captured, I return
Consciousness streams in, with broken images
A motorcyclist touches the fringe of my existence
The Lord of the Universe secured my sanity
Images of wooden Gods, of a jungle neem tree
Interspersed with celebrations of celestial love
The theme remained of beauty in sandstone
Of its golden brown hues against the blue sky
Of a yellowed middleman between me and God
He, the omnipotent God, seemed armless
His eyes were large, circular and lidless
He sees us unblinking, in our absurdness
And in our countless follies and pointless fears
Another day's images come crowding in
Of the vast expanse of a salty lake
And a many-hued shrine rising from its depths
Celebrating a young bride's watery death
How we tried catching orange suns
Lurking behind shattered mountains
While aliveness ate sea-aliveness since dead
Then blissful somnolence takes over
My hotel walls crumble and then the world.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Celebrating God's birthday**

In the rock lay my lovely child-God
Who was born today morning.
There is this saffron-robed monk
Under the folds of water in the rock
Lighting the perfumed camphor for him
In the dark recesses of my mind
Whenever the orange sun is missing.

(On visiting the cave temple of Rama in Bhopal on the Srirama Navami day (the birthday of Srirama)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Choices**

It is on a thin line that I exist all the time.
My hours and days become nights
And dissolve into endless time.
Clearly it was not my choice to exist
Remember, when I came into being
In the viscous amniotic fluid
My body actually started pulsating
Outside of my own free volition.
My birth was a cataclysmic accident
Now that I exist and occupy space
I cannot stop my heart from beating.

Outside, the eagle swirled thrice
In circular motions in the April sky
And settled down on the ledge
Of my nineteenth floor office room.

He looked at me nervously, aware of me.
His shrill eagle-call pierced the sky
As he took off towards its vault
He swirled, once again, in circles
And swooped on the lizard in the bush.
Like me, neither of them had choices.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Civilizing the Bastar tribals**

Long ago our courage deserted us
Thought soon froze in its tracks
Our spiked hair rose to the sky
As the cold air bit into our bones
White rain poured on thatched roofs
Forming yellow snakes of waters
And outside the rusted window rails
On the yellow- dropped leaves
Yesterday was the day of cockfights
The birds stared at their bound legs
Waiting to bleed their bird-friends
Our white fluid glistened in the pots
We went high on smelly rice drinks
We made a rope circle among trees
That was the bloody arena for cocks
Our basket threw up big plastic dice
Our village youth staked day’s labor
Our children now have blue uniforms
They will one day be clerks in office
Our women continue transplanting rice
Our gods have stopped being angry
Whatever we did in billowing skirts
Our moment never came, actually
Inclusiveness submerged all, just like
Yellow sick-sweet fly-riding pulp
The fiery snake slithered quickly away
The fluidity of confusion remained.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Clay-pot**

The lights glistened forgetfully
Yesterday over fried potatoes
It was just a whiff of thought
These bones in the clay-pot.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Colors**

Her  soul craves reaching out
While fingers moved rhythmically.
Experience comes in glutinous colors
And colors break out of vast silences
Stillness finally reaches her senses
Like mist touching the morning grass
Dripping from the overhanging creeper.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Corners**

Light poured through the corners;
A gentle breeze blew over them.
The corners had their own soul
They were lying in a pool of light
Creating their own silhouettes
The jasmines whispered in them
Through soft jellied moonlight
Their fragrance held us in thrall.
Our old tiled house had its corners
Soft and purring like our family kitten
They cast such fine shadows
Dusky, deep and mysterious
We looked into our abandoned well
To fathom the depth of its corners
The water there was a mere shadow
The shadow of a reality that once was.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Countdown**

Light then permeated
Our being and the body
Partook of the starlight
The mind felt light and
Floating like a bird's feather
Riding down layers of air.

Then it all changed one day
And  we started piling hours
Later, minutes and seconds
And chronicling our activities
For record and viewing later.
We needed this benchmark
A referential framework
For everything in our lives.

The countdown has now begun
We no longer care for history
We now are all ears and eyes
For the tick-tock of our clock
And the flip of our calendar.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Creative Block**

My mornings, these days, begin suspiciously
Like remnants of yesterday's rancid dreams
Words pour forth as though they are thoughts
I stand on the edge of my nineteenth floor room
In the same plane of existence as my eagle-friend
And shout them into the misty morning air
They all come back, over the dregs of morning tea
As  empty resolutions and so much semantics.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Death**

He went just the reverse
In a splurge of light
A regression from entity
Through amnios to nonentity
A sudden violent breeze
Hit him in the solar plexus
And confused his senses.
Up there it is freezing
In the pores of your skin.

Temporal divisions disappeared
As did the flimsy margins between
Foggy myths and subliminal reality
There was an un-filling of space
Left with only a tiny entity in time
Close-ended, where he existed.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Death of my driver's father**

In the meanwhile there is this driver’s drama
When he gets into train to see ailing dad
He hears dad already dead of too much sugar
And look, death is so sweet and so prosaic!

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Desires**

He has grown hard in New England
Growing things from  them stones.
Because God is hard and lonesome
While them kids are soft and easy.
He has now grown ripe on the bough
Desires under the elms make them all
Grow ripe and fall to the ground.

(Reading the play “Desires under the elms”- by Eugene O’Neill)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Dream**

In the morning it all came back, awake
From the dream, the planet called the earth
The birds chirped among new-born buds
Their colors spoke interminably of dreams.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Dreams**

Several flimsy images are played
Behind the opaqueness
Of my heavy-lidded eyes.

I am not at the centerstage.
They are nothing, not even existence
Just fragments of a fractured reality.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Dying of love**

You watch the celluloid horror
Of a twelveyear-old girl
Lying spreadeagled, shrieking
As knowledge strikes as horror
In the suburban train
Of three living-dead humans
Watching a twelveyear-old
Dying of love.

(After watching a Hindi movie on the video in a night journey by bus from Mumbai to Hyderabad)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Early Rains**

In early spring our mango tree burst into flowers
And filled our veranda and  hearts with fragrance
As our swinging feet touched the translucent sky
By May tiny mangoes appeared in the dense foliage
Then, one dark night, when  we were fast asleep
The monsoon arrived with fierce wind and gale
Spoiling the children's fun and promises of  fruit.
We blame this entirely on our cuckoo friend
Who brought in premature rains this season
By persistent and persuasive musical supplications.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Elegance**

She is draped in diaphanous chiffons
Accentuating mysterious under-shadows:
Commit them to your tactile memory
Interspersed with the fragrant hum
Of the whispering airconditioner-
Breathe in their stillness, deep,
As they fall, one by one, over her
As her eyes remain half-shut.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Enacting transience on a pleasure boat**

Transience echoes  branch upon branch,
In the peepal tree when you look up in its spaces
The tree had been there before you started existing:
Only the squirrel knows when and how it began
After several secrets it shares with the wind.
Actually there are no secrets, only knowing light
In its deep-set eyes which stare at the hills
There is no hint of dissolution in its fixed stare
Nor a logical incoherence in its ponderous shadow.
As it stands the earth knows it and understands.
It is you who think of dissolution, its earth-to felling
The dry leaves on the ground, rotting twigs
Animals leaving traces of their decaying smells
That is what you think and become, all the while
Carrying the cloud-shred of transience above you.
This spiritual stuff is warm, boosting selfness
The arrogance of understanding, purported eminence
You then pan your self-deluding energy, by the hand
Suffer death and birth pangs, cells overgrowing.
Here, on the boat music flows in drum-beats
The lake is resonant with the city’s vulgarity
And shadowy figures enact transience in its night
Their beauty-dance flows in absurd movements
Their arms and feet are hurled in the air helplessly
Their shadows crouch in flesh and blood transience.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Existence**

Here a talking man is sleeping,
His arms akimbo, feet in the air.
Then were wild gesticulations,
Sweat on brow, fire in the eyes
Now vacant and unconnected.
He no longer exists in space
But he had happened in time
Whatever begins shall remain.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Faces**

He drew faces
On the city's hoardings
His brush touched up
Their cheekbones to new heights
They cast nebulous shadows
On the wrinkled lower lip
His own eyes were
Large semicircular sunflowers
Waiting for their butterflies
That would emerge only
After the flowers wilted.

In the wee-hours of the city
He pictured Time, perfectly,
On the murky banks of the Hooghly
Waiting in the discarded jetties
of its deceased jute factories.

The faces were all there
Jutting out unnecessarily
Refusing to go away
Their cheekbones swelled
In their bony hardness.
Their eyes were fetid fish-pools
With a muddy sediment
Of decayed fish long since dead.
The faces were there, all of them
They occupied his space
There was no flesh in them,
but only bones.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Faith**

When the stars sprinkled dust on our roof
And the night’s queen whitely bloomed.
There was déjà vu in the night’s smell
The left over one of the previous day
That had mixed with tar and hot sun
Which had in turn mixed with bodies.
That night was hope and some angst
While nothing ever happened, it would.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Father**

Invisible is his presence;
On dark nights he acquires
The luminosity of an astral body
At Gaya the waters reflected him
As did the leaves of the pipal tree
He smiled through the clouds
The cloud’s shapes were
Mysterious and friendly.
I can see him there
In the morning, when the sky
Is bare of  white fluffy clouds
And in the blue distance
The mountains pile one on the other.
On the day of the holy bath,
He comes riding on the ripples
Of the sacred Godavari river
On the annual ritual day
The crow becomes him,
Pecking at balls of cooked rice
At other times he resides in my dreams.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Fear of Death**

Death crawled on the tender underside
The body threatened to explode in fear
Up there, on the first floor, you were alone
With sweaty fear between you and infinity
What seemed to matter was a dusty existence
Enclosed in divisions of space and time
In the cold cellar darkness touched your body
Smelling fearfully like yesterday’s death
There was death in the smelly dankness
These insects were creatures of the dark
Their life signified your ceasing to exist
We know their venomous bites would not matter
There is this mountain in exquisite morning light
Which will become the center of your self
And grant freedom from the flesh to the world.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Fears**

Fears knock at midnights
Consciousness flows by
And embedded in time,
I stand on its banks
Like a giant banyan
With an immobile future
Then the first scent
Of the mango blossoms
Whispers in my blood
The orange winter sun
Crawls out of the coconut
The sky above my house
Turns saffron and then white
Soon I give up guessing
Where the roof ended
And the white sky began

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Fever**

I lie here, on this side,
A miserable, reluctant host
They enter me, quietly,
And cling to the nuclei
Of my epithelial cells
Stirring up fevered passions
Beyond lies opaque space
Mysterious and impenetrable
Neither I nor they have choices
That is the way the script goes.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Fire and water (A morning in Sivakasi)**

A shrill peacock-cry from the bell tower
Pierced my morning silence
The temple bell rang and rang
With its thick tongue in fever
Images, fiery, some smouldering
Came dropping from the white sky
Clusters of acacias that had grown
Waterless under the skin of the earth
Spread their ghostly hair evenly
Into the rainless, blazing August sky
The girls with jasmines in their hair
Stood unblinking all day, in the hall,
Bringing fire into people’s lives
Dark sweaty men made balls of fire
Old ladies kneaded fiery dough
There is fire in their tired hearts,
In their minds, on their hands
But no water to quench their thirsts.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Flickr. dreams**

I have several black and white “flickr” dreams
Nobody touches them because they are
Just my black and white dreams, not theirs
And it is the colored ones they are after.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**God’s mountains**

Invisible are their powers, unfelt and secure
The mountains lay there brown and puffing
In the afternoon sun among yellow-dropped leaves
The scrolls on their walls dated back to eons
Brown-skinned ancestors shrieked, ghosts,
Their smelly wings flapped in cave-silences
Several worn-out paths winded to forgot ruins
There they stopped midway vanishing in bushes
The temple bells were heard under the banyan tree
The tree spread its hair reaching the steep slopes
It was the clouds that brought the brown haze
The sky ended up in blue torpor in penciled hills
There in the wilderness shrieked British ghosts
Collectors who had rested in lonely stone buildings
Pondering deeply on history’s ghosts lying supine
On broken temple foundations with missing walls
There in a stony niche slept God with his eyes closed
A lotus emerged from his navel, mysterious and born
In fact the whole of the world burst out from there.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Hair Cut on a Good Friday**

This Friday should surely be good
Topped up by an evening hair cut
To cleanse fear deep in the follicles
Helped by a fakir* in the head-cloth.

(Shirdi Saibaba from whose Samadhi temple I had just returned after seeking his spiritual grace)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Happening**

The breakfast is happening
Other things are happening
At other times and places.
There was this steady hum
That happened all the time.
A yellow flower popped out
From behind my ears
A waiting, a painless hanging
The layers of the world
Piled one on the other
Things keep happening
All the time, all the space
Nothing by me, whatever.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Heart attack**

I have known it coming all these days
These specters in long white gowns
Decide my future in hushed whispers
As their smoky whiteness envelops me
Their shadowy medical epithets fall
Like the feathers of a bird in flight.
It is just like it was at that time
When I muscled my helpless way through
Your all-around mother-softness
Now that I am growing into nonexistence
Tell me what I should do with these
Useless brilliant multi-colored shadows
I have been collecting all these days.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**His gods, my gods**

As rain falls softly on the gleaming park trees, I walk on the wet track
And its etched geometrical shapes move endlessly like Nabokov’s trees
Which seem to be going on a pilgrimage to somewhere all the time.
The boy in his story has drawn gods with round eyes looking at the sky
My own Gods have unblinking eyes which see everything, everywhere
Because they do not have lids, they see all the time, all the space.

(Reading Gods, a short story by Vladimir Nabokov)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Homo Sapiens**

The ape reviewed the homo sapiens that was
A fistful of matter seemed to matter so much
Why then blow it up in search for other matter
His sun had brilliantly thought he was the sun
Then other skulls came telling of other suns
A bearded man dropped a lightweight petal
Another’s fruit explored the physical world
A rainbowy microcosm appeared with spirals
Yet there was saffron fear in a fistful of matter
Knowledge was but neatly stacked craniums
With the entire inside matter notably missing.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## Images

Several disjointed and derelict images
Fuse into my flowing consciousness;
A dimpled beauty selling hotel space
A nest-builder mother-crow pecking
Tiny green young mangoes hanging
Alongside April's burning morning sun
Suddenly a kurta-clad gray-haired woman
Bursts upon the conscious with violence
Her comforting presence in the airplane
Complementing, by her side, another woman
Who is sleep-walking, on her way,
Her head in her hands, to take charge
Of a mere body which once throbbed
In the deep recesses of her own body
Disparate images, wide apart in time,
Flow into my sleep and then out of it
Sometimes straying into my wakeful self.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Images in a train**

They lived outside the pale of my existence
Just a few images that touched the fringe
“Hello image”: Mersault addressed Marthe
Just like only one of her other lovers did
The woman here was a mere image
The way her eyes flashed at her husband
As she changed the nappies of the child
The child swung in the cloth-cradle, gently,
Like a weaver bird swings in the fibrous nest
He cried, he gurgled, he knocked about
A mere image in another image’s existence
Mersault knew Marthe was a mere image
Flesh-and-blood Marthe did not know this
This woman did not know she was an image
Only I knew she was an image, like Marthe.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Images in poetry**

This wordy struggle went on for too long
It is airy words which chased beauty-thoughts
While several filigreed images filtered light
At the back, a flung radio played on the roof
While Bukowski watched the sun shine
On the woman's behind up in the air,
In the garden, his folded figure on the window.
A little heaving bird on the electric wires
Played high drama in shrill baritone, you see,
A real thing, not an insubstantial phenomenon.
Poetry came and went with wind and rain
Premature and dusty on fragrant creepers
Their flowers became stars on moonless nights.

(Reference here is to the poem "A radio with guts by Charles Bukowski)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Jaws**

We ruminate here, in this space,
With our highly flexible lower jaws
Making vigorous elliptical movements
A soft morning sun calls us out
From behind the General Post Office
A dark child, naked and shy,
Laughs from the ripples of the pond
"Cracker! ", shouts the girl in English
To the utterly lovable Great Dane
Who sniffs busily at the roots
Of the wide-spread butter-cup tree
Looking for a chance burial bone
These men and women laugh
For no particular reason, really.
Other people hurt yet other people
While everybody laughs for no reason
Endowed with a free lower jaw
Soon we retire to our caves
In our venerable teacher's village
We cannot sleep yet, you know.
If we turn to the left of the bed
We fall to the Earth's bosom
If we turn to the right of the bed
We remain suspended in the air
Like so much particulate matter
We have our frightening day-mares
We lie supine with wide-open eyes
Fixed on the wooden scaffold
A giant anaconda sleeps there
When it wakes from its slumber
Our jaws will come unstuck.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Kolkata's kids**

Kudos to Kolkata's kids
With lily-white cheeks
And lightweight stomachs
Scrounging for food crumbs
In its garbage dumps
They keep the city clean
And our conscience clear.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Kubja (Dwarf)**

Deformed, bent,  hunched up
Barefooted, waiting patiently,
Flower-seller Kubja counted the
Number of garlands readied for him.
The needle's eye twinkled and
The silken thread smelled fragrant
One hundred and seventeen
Said she with bated breath.

He that wears the blueness of the sky
And a crown of peacock feather
Will soon appear in these avenues
The sky explodes in a heady mixture
Of blinding light and deafening sound
With the first arrival of the monsoon
The air is rife with floral anticipation
The jasmines are wet with the rains
The streets  filled with the excitement
Of earth-rain alchemy waiting for him.

Kubja passed the slender thread through the
One hundred and eighteenth garland for him
There he is making his swift and sure way
Through the milling crowds as his laughing eyes
Have met her eager gaze, mystical and quizzing
Her crooked body quivered at his touch
'Pretty dear' he whispered into her eager ears,
'You are the most beautiful woman in the world.'

(In some versions of the Bhagavatam Kubja is an ointment-seller working in Kamsa's court.Hunchbacked Kubja gets straightened on Krishna's touch.I have taken some liberties with her character in order to make her more interesting. Consequently Kubja here is a flower-seller waiting for Krishna's arrival with her pretty garlands.)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Laughter**

Meanings do not accrue
They happen on the side
Away from the world’s center
There is no fear of uncertainty,
Of not being able to cope.
The metaphors sound clichéd
In the world’s understood
Something much deeper
Comes out of the tranquil eyes
That brimmed with meaning
We laugh all the time, here,
In the parks, under the trees
We do not understand the world
Our talk comes from the medulla
Our thinking is under the ribs
A transition from the concrete
To a fuzzy laughter-filled world
We stopped crying long ago.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Leaves**

Here, the man went inward and wise,
Reluctant teacher, about to enter light
The leaves about him had a faint aura
Not a pall of dust but of wisdom's light,
The why of all including our nothing-
We who had liquid origins and trauma.
He had an answer to all our questions
But no questions to our lucent answers
His ears were long and unhearing
As were his eyes small and crinkly.
It was not he who patted his tummy
And laughed to the vulgar crowds loud
Just a yellow figurine on dusty shelves.
Did you say he had frozen in bronze
With an enormous stomach side-splitting?
Actually our fears froze behind his ears
I can hear their crunch in these leaves.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Love**

Flesh on flesh
Bone on bone
Eyes go astray
He that spoke
Also unspoke.
The mornings
Presage gray
The evenings
Live up to them
Monochromatic
Experiences
As always.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Memories of the city of Porbandar**

The city stands on the sea where the waves beat black rocks,
The white surf of an ocean which stretches to distant Aden
Where the ancestors had landed in a dhow to make trading money.
Tall white stone buildings stood quietly against the blue sea.
At night they wore the transparent veil of pale moonlight.
On moonlit nights perfumed society people stood on the promenade
Among the rocks where the waves from the distant Gulf beat the city.
Dark people sold smuggled tape recorders with whirring tape-spools.
The whitewashed buildings had white peace in their upper bellies.
But in their under-bellies they had fishermen’s knives and red revenge.
A frail old man from the city made white salt at the sea-shore
And spun white cotton on hand-wheels making others wear white.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Midday in Midnapore**

The day sizzled as though
The Gods were angry
In the evening the sky opened
In electric anger hurling
Torrents of water through
Our hotel room windows
The windows were fragile
And too full of gaping holes
Alone, in the hotel room,
I thought a thousand things-
The day's  inane images
An old heritage building
Overrun with wild vegetation
Phantoms rising from the ruins
The air was heavy with events
I heard the Kauravas' war cries
Ferreting out Pandavas in exile
From their secret existence
Then a trigonometrical puzzle
On the hill everything appeared,
Standing on the edge of time,
As though one looked at a slice
Of life of what it was like then
Soon sleep came in waves
Demolishing the hotel walls and
My flesh-and-blood existence.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Miracles**

The leaves felt disconnected on the sudden earth
The sky was broken in parts, teasing through
Tiny leaf-spaces full of squirrel tails and red ants
For some reason all our prayers were held up
On tiled roofs and history’s banyan treetops
We squatted on the cement steps, waiting for miracles
The neighborhood thatched hut sat immobile
The gold of its last summer turning to weary gray.
The grass walks tired of several days’ soundless feet
Between us arose questions of unspoken skepticism
Our eyes shone with wet anticipation behind their lids
In the evening the rain obliterated our foot-prints
It is as though we have never existed under the sky
It is as though these things will never happen to us.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Morning images**

My images were diffused and meshed with a train’s song
That jostled with a bird-call in the morning’s silence
As the winter’s grass-cold seeped through bare feet
Consciousness became learning and then white screen of death
As a certain heart of lipid deposits became blue and unmoving
An abrupt epilogue to a life’s power point presentation.
A tree gave up consciousness, ready to feed the gardener’s fire
Unmindful birds chirped on its dead branches in the soft sun
Everything went on the usual, nothing mattered in real terms
Not even all those reddish-tinged, wistful copies of reality.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Mother and sea**

On the shore, an image of her
Shimmered, in frothy laughter.
The sea has now risen
Like her own body’s upheaval,
Then, in pure, purple pain.
The sea will calm down
When the night is born.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**My ancestors**

These mountains had existed
When my ancestors had lived
And roamed their risky ridges
Their silhouettes scurried for cover.

When darkness echoed in the hollows
A silky sky touched the mountaintop
While fluffy cotton clouds had cast
Diaphanous shadows on their flanks.
In the unblinking moments of my eyes
They saw my foolish childhood
in knickers, asking silly questions
These were the very questions
Asked by my ancestors who thought
They mastered the mountains end to end.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**My child-God**

A tiny paper scrap
Holds all his secrets.
On its glossy obverse
There is a mystic mantra.
Behind it, he smiles
At first unfelt, unseen
His bejeweled child-feet
Touch the orange sky
As  pigtailed bearers
Swing his palanquin-cradle.
Beauty waves surge
Amid perfumed sticks
Yellowed holy rice
Sweet banana slices
Fragrant camphor flames.
Metallic discs meet
Fingers dance on drums
To feverish head shakes
Hair tousled, foreheads moist
The blue-sky child sleeps

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**My childhood**

The midsummer tin-roofed alphabet-school
Burst with thirsty crows and earthen pots
Long-gowned smoky-eyed phantom-teachers
Guided tiny fingers along chalked letters
The water glistened telltale in the bottom
Waiting for the crows to bend and breathe
Deeply over their gently moving reflections
The pebbles would take long time to drop
In the meantime a squeezed citrus leaf
Mingled its delicious smell perfectly with
The lazy crow’s caw on the branches
At the altar of the church I tried to find
The fragrance of my life’s beginning
In the sandal paste and burnt incense
Our pond smelled of the aromatic chemistry
Of wind over water and long lotus stems
At midnight dark burglars made oval holes
In the neighbor’s house with a shovel’s thud
In the afternoon scary policemen arrived
Hand-in-hand with ebony-backed thieves
The ghostly tamarind brooded in the night
Little tomato plants shone red in the corner
Our petite pig-tailed girl played peeved wife
On long summer nights the circus band played
The stars flickered in the chinks of the tent.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**My fellow-passenger in the Train**

The way she sat, cross-legged
With her eyes screwed up
She seemed to take a stance
But that was not a stance
Energy swelled within her
In waves after waves
Only to break, boisterously,
On rocky shores of nothingness.
Her cell phone rang fitfully
Interrupting formation
Of penciled shapes
Of her  textile creations.
Her shapes, not still forms,
But frenetically moving images
Sizzled and then vaporised
In split-second transience
Everything moved towards a stance
A fixed identity for her soul.
Her fabric brooked no such thing
The struggle was worth nothing
Exhausted, she went off to sleep.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**My little pal on the icq**

The last time I  saw her on the net
She was still growing milk teeth
Strands  from her tufted hair
Danced on her pretty forehead
She wore her unspoilt innocence
On the lambent parting of her hair.

She  now talks of man-woman stuff
In the morning she sits on my icq panel
Like the little blue-green bird of summer
Which sat on my parapet wall of balcony
Heaving her meager body as she sang.

A frayed uncle of full forty years
Wants yellowed sleaze on the sly.

What should she do, with a lustful man,
Who wolf-whistles in the silences of the net
All she needs is a little gurgling brother
A bundle of shrieking flesh in mother's lap
Or a freckled school-boy brother in shorts
Not a leathery-skinned lecher of an icq pal.

Take my son, my dear, hold his hands
Walk into the freedom of the mountains
These little blackberries taste no sweet
Although they bleed and redden your palms
And their bushes have piercing thorns.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**My mother's brocades**

My mother's moth-balled  brocades,
Are lying systematically stacked up
In her ancient wooden cupboard
They smell of her, the smell
That belonged to a slice of her life.

This yellow one which she wore
Just once in her life had wrapped
A coy twenty-year-old bride
Tentatively setting her dainty foot
Into the hesitant bridal home.

Somewhere in the backwoods
Several industrious silkworms
Had spun miles of salivary yarn
In the foliage of the mulberry tree
To make this gorgeous five-yard sari.

The rustle of the silk drowned
The wails of the boiling cocoons
These worms died that beauty would live
In their plaintive cries lay new bridal hopes.

My mother, the coy bride of yesteryears,
Is now as non-existent as the worms
That had ceased to exist spinning
The smooth silk for her bridal finery.

Her bridal fragrance lives on among
The delicate folds of these gossamer silks
That the worms had died weaving
Death is so fragrant and so memorable.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**My mother's last days**

Behind the wall the sound had come
Of illogic and helplessness, in bed
And in the insecurity of the bathroom.
Then she laughed her eyes slanting
It was at life she was laughing
Now at you, steeped in life, in her eyes,
From behind the mask of unreality.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**My sister**

Then the flowers bloomed
In our laid-back backyard
My little sister shouted
And clapped for quickening
The pumpkins grew fat
With glowing textures
She asked why our palm tree
Had withered for no reason
Our favorite water -snake.
Shed its scales on the fence.
She scooped out a handful
Of the fragrant earth
Made it into tiny balls
Caught a grasshopper
By its wings and made it
Hold the balls, one by one,
That was a milkmaid
Carrying pots of  milk.
Our coconut lost its frond
In last year's lightning
It had given us years of
Coconut crop, you see.
Their juice was so delicious!
During the butterfly season
My sister counted the cocoons
And watched the butterflies
Break out one by one.
This season wild flowers
Have grown where she last slept
As dusk fell noisy cicadas
From invisible crevices
Made fine music for her
There is now nobody
To count those cocoons when
The butterflies will emerge.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Nobody is expected by the ferry**

Yesterday evening, as on all evenings,
The banyan briefly dallied with the river
Its tiny red fruits floated on the waters
Glistening in the sun like rubies
The woman-bather, busy disentangling
Pieces of driftwood from her floating  hair
Took no notice of the fruity overtures.
The last ferry did not bring him
Nor did the five ‘o clock circular train
Which disgorged people in sweaty shirts
Onto the dusty Bagh Bazar platform
The mongrel got up from its disturbed sleep
Sniffing at the coal-smell left by the train
Went back to its sleep under the cement bench.
The beggars on the river steps ate their early dinner
And retired for the day on the platform
Somehow they had scintillating prior knowledge
That nobody was actually expected
On the train or by the ferry on the day
Or for that matter, on any other day.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Not this, not this**

Cigarette in hand
Matted locks
Ashes on chest
Saffron dhoti
Silver hair
Flowing beard
God's own man
With a beggar's bowl
In search of Truth

Nothing is real
The body is ephemeral
Nothing of him belongs.
The ether of maya
Envelops all things
And all creatures

The sadhu exists
Only in Time
For him there is
Only the X-coordinate
Of Time and no
Y-coordinate of Space

He is a living ghost
An infinitesimal pixel
Of the cosmic
Phosphorescence
He lives in our thoughts
And in our dreams as
Sanatana purusha
Yet he does not exist.

Between him
And the world
No causality subsists
He exists
Despite the world

When the world cries
He laughs
And makes light
Of its troubles
He cries while
The world celebrates
Its triumphs and glories

He does not participate
In the drama of life
He is only a
Bemused spectator
Standing on the rim.

Yet his wizened face
Is as unreal as
His ganza smoke-rings
His flowing beard melts
Like a fistful of snow
His ochre robes
Dissolve into the
Azure evening sky.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**On a rainy night in Hyderabad**

With hot springrolls we plonked into deep chairs
To watch waves after waves of silver rain
In the night’s depths the fogs croaked in gusty unison
Over shallow puddles on the edge of the street.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**On completion of the construction of the house**

The house workers who had no house
Shifted their house things to another house,
Everything on their heads
And nothing over their heads.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**On failing to get admittance to the Taj Mahal**

Yesterday's eye-red was but a phase
Having lost the moonlight all the way
Behind large doors and khaki authority
(When we pray in marble mosques
We tend to get killed on Fridays
Because beauty does not really matter
But only the blood-red duty-call)
In the end we see where the king went
In the cold cellar, past earthly beauty
The priest's God-call pierced the vault
As beauty is not truth, only coldness.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**On my mother's death**

While I was having my head shaved in her smoke
I asked why the hearse should have blown the siren
As we had gone about throwing flattened rice on her silence.
But, when she was alive, the van that took her
To draw a map of her brain’s electrical wiring
Had blown no siren at all on the crowded roads.
Later, in my complicated muslin cloth and ashes
I wondered why the river flowed in my mind and the road
When there were no rains in the Vindhya hills beyond.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**On return from Guruvayoor temple**

The ego’s fires had subsided, quietly,
Golden hues appeared on slept-in beds
I tried catching sprawled self-shadows
Products of yesterday’s mashed egos.
The graphic eye, silver-lined and lying,
Was helpless to bolster bewitching beauty
The eagle’s cry went up to the sky
From the green sea of coconut fronds
Yesterday the Godchild smiled exquisitely
Today is another day of empty space
So much incandescent space to be filled.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**On return from the Puri Jagannath temple**

The Lord of the Universe secured my sanity
Images of wooden Gods, of a jungle neem tree
Interspersed with celebrations of celestial love
The theme remained of beauty in sandstone
Of its golden brown hues against the blue sky
Of a yellowed middleman between me and God
He, the omnipotent God, seemed armless
His eyes were large, circular and lidless
He sees us unblinking, in our absurdness
And in our countless follies and pointless fears

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**On return to Mumbai**

The city is daylong and sea –backed
The sea-child deeply dangled his feet
Into the sea at the misty radio club
Near the cockroach-ridden sea palace
Bringing back a tide of memories
Years ago, I had bought my identity
Here, in a piece of paper, full of lies
And endless possibilities of hurt
In the fragrant harbour to come.
Now the sea is calm but afraid
I see Rukmini's lying-in hospital
Along with the juice hair parlours.
Stock- brokers rub rotund stomachs.
Scared dons account for deaths
There, at the junction, in a sea of cars
Stand these muddy-haired children
They have a nasty habit of poking
Their outstretched grubby hands
Directly into the holes of your eyes.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**On the Vizag beach**

Try collecting sea-smelling cowries
Blow through the aperture of the conch
Hear, hear what you would like to hear
Like the chugging  train's clackety
Which amenably synchronizes with
What you have been waiting to hear
Through the iron-smelling blotched glass
When you leaned  cheeks against the louver
Stretching to see the telephone wires
Swing rhythmically up and down.

Fishing boats of nostalgic yesteryears
Had bobbed up out of the sea's wilderness
And then went down under the boisterous billows
Just like those chattering telephone wires with
Blue specks of bush-birds balancing on them
The ancient red and white lighthouse these days
Holds up no light for the straying sea-farer
Not even as much as the flicker of a restless firefly.

You see I blow deep and hard into the conch
Hoping to produce some really fine sea-music.
I have thrust my child-foot into the tingling sand
And if I take it out my sand-house will collapse
And I have to look for another site on the beach.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Our horses no longer fly**

The Bankura Horses

In Bishnupur our horses do not fly
Like the horses of the sun's chariot
Their long decorated necks look pretty
But break soon and dissolve in the earth.
Our  Mother’s head broke in splinters
In her  royal father’s uninvited house.
Our  terra cotta temples are Godless
Our temple ponds are washermens ghats
Our gods no longer adorn the Dance Hall
To witness the divine love dance
We now have potato cold storages
And  listless young men playing cards
Under the shade of the  banyan tree
Our horses do not fly these days.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Our Pipal tree**

Our moss-laden backyard wall played host
To hundreds of creeping-crawling creatures
A little Pipal with thick-green conical leaves
Spread its roots in its entrails leaving a crack
The widening crack soon became home
To a wild creeper with tiny red flowers
That set our entire backyard sky ablaze
The Pipal grew quickly in horizontal space
Little blue birds from far lands visited the tree
Hundreds of big busy black ants crawled
All the way to its top dangling in the air
Our proud Pipal swayed, blissfully unaware
That its burgeoning growth brought havoc
It is a matter of time before the crack widens
And the bricks give way spelling its doom.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Our temple priest**

He is  our temple man, our  friendly intermediary  between us and God.
His words were a mere drone in the temple loud speaker in the morning
But the power of his words  extended  beyond the earth's  borders.
He has  a belly round as  God's earth, with cosmic incantations in them
His words and flame and  water connected us to our monkey god.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Our time is leaking**

We are  creatures of night and poetry
We stand here on the brink of the night.
On the other side we hear this green oil
That is leaking, dropp by drop, into the sea
It is our time that is leaking into the night.

(Concerning the disastrous oil leak in The Gulf of Mexico)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Passing by a tribal weekly fair in Bastar**

Yesterday was the day of cockfights
The birds stared at their bound legs
Waiting to bleed their bird-friends
Our white fluid glistened in the pots
We went high on smelly rice drinks.
We made a rope circle among trees,
That was the bloody arena for cocks.
Our basket threw up big plastic dice,
Our village youth staked day’s labor.
Our children now have blue uniforms-
They will one day be clerks in office.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Phantoms**

As phantoms of past hurts
Knocked at my midnight
At the unlit corner where
Awareness took a blind turn
I tried to think tall cedars
And tiny violet flowers
Strewn on the garden path
Sundials with quick hands
Full-grown Great Danes
Chasing winter shadows
Then my morning came soon
In the aura of the glass-house
And the luminescent spaces
Of the sun-lit bamboo groves.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## Poems

Creatures of the gone world walk,
In measured meters, by dark streams
Flowing with the city’s vulgar sins.
Thinking poems are autumn-falling
In criss-cross patches of golden sun,
Actually these are pallid ghosts
Pulled out of unlit eastern skies
Laughing poems feel like poems
On the grassy mounds, children
Mimicking toothless laughter, hiding
Lots of death-fear knotted around
Approaching birthdays in jitters.
Silver manes falling on grey scarves,
They laugh their guts out, ha ha,
In the club of morning laughter
On grassy mounds in sunlit parks.
Yellowed skulls hiding in monkey-hoods
Hardly hear the world’s laughter.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Poetry comes**

Images strike like moths in the first rains
At the dead of the night, they embrace
Their shadows on the frosted glass
The window –sill is carpeted with wings
The garden walk is strewn with
Innumerable carcasses of one-day glory.

Then the weather was warm and oppressive
It was only towards the vaporous evenings
That light rain kissed the fragrant earth
Nowhere was the north-west monsoon in sight
These fairy creatures crouched under the earth
With half-sprouted wings for take-off
This season it is entirely different
These are long wet nights followed by
Rich rakings of their gossamer wings.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Poetry daily**

We try our poetry daily
Under the pale sky
With fluffy clouds
And silver-lined streams.
In the river evenings
Men too get thrown in
On the river bed, pale
But glowing in shapes
Their textures tell-tale
In the dusk of the camera.
The camera speaks poems
As the sun’s gold grows
And the river shimmers.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Poetry is late**

Poetry is now the late breeze rustling in the tree
After the temple tank's mossy stillness.
On consciousness had luminously arrived
The phallus god, in brown beauty- hues
And cyclical eight faced phallus, in turns,
Tranquil-white and angry-red in stone eyes.
Polished now as God, a washer man had used it
In rhythmic beats, all for beating laundry.
We have our myths, carefully polished
Over Time's washed stones of the riverbed
Our accumulated minds enormously meshed
As a haystack of shared consciousness.
Our gods have uneasily existed all these days
With spirits who have to be driven out
From darkly lonely houses and fearful men.
On the hillock pallid ghosts come haunting
In moonlit houses amid systolic blood-chants
You know our god is fear, not rain's beauty
Or lonely jungles with the fall of cascades
I keep thinking, while my glass eye twitches
For brown beauty and pixelated praise.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## Poetry words

The ugly caterpillar eats beauty-holes in our garden leaves
Which are poetry- words scrawled in thick sticky leaves
And then they become fatter on the flanks with floral designs.
The stinking caterpillar then disappears beyond the fence
Leaving behind incandescent thingy poetry- words.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Possession**

The Goddess spoke, fiercely,
Through white anger’s mists
The body shouted thick-throated
A lower order goddess, surely,
Cannot be all that demanding
Crying for well-fattened cocks.
Fear becomes the key translating
To waves of body movements.
A matter of thinned blood supply
Or a fleeting hardening of vessels,
She lay there sprawled, wailing.
Anger burst out of the bounds
She had crossed all body-barriers
Just when sanity finally returned.
A mere transient ischemic attack
Or a turmeric- yellowed Goddess
Extending dominion over disbelief?

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Prayer**

In the rock lay my lovely child-God
Who was born today morning.
There is this saffron-robed monk
Under the folds of water in the rock
Lighting the perfumed camphor for him
In the dark recesses of my mind
Whenever the orange sun is missing.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## Questions

I go back in pearl-white consciousness
Where lies my own future possibility
Thousands of gray existence questions
Remain to be answered in the finite space
Filled with tiny snow-flakes of fallible logic
When I finally go knowledge shall arrive
In luminous trails and gusts of wind bringing
Autumn-leaves of answered questions.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Rains in Tirupati**

It rained all night
Frogs croaked
From muddy cesspools
Wet crows shivered
On wind-buffeted branches
Dogs shook themselves
Of chilly wetness
Moths took wings
Of one-day glory
Coconuts swayed
In rain-drenched delight
Droplets from the sky
Were manna to farmers
Rivulets flowed on the hills
In shimmering cascades
The hills wore  green
Bright yellow flowers
Filled the air with fragrance
All the creatures of the earth
Joined the chorus of life.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Refusal**

I know you have said that enough
In the day’s heat and moon’s eclipse
In the horizon I looked far enough
And deep in the tree’s silences
The leaves rustled in the night.
What can you do again and now
Unless art has not left here as yet
And senses still matter to the mind.
In the hollow of my downy back
Your after-being remains as refusal
Senselessness hurts in my fingers
As though my senses are conscious
And are offended deeply by refusal.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Remembering a schizophrenic boss**

That man in anger thinks he were there
But anger makes him just not there
Because he wants much to hurt you
Not in the stomach but in your upper.
He is quizzing because he is not sure.
He gets into a maze of wordy thoughts
And his words confuse you and him.
They hit you in your solar plexus and his.
Now, now, he wants to saunter leisurely
On the frosty wastes of the snowed hills
As I saunter leisurely now in this night
On the frozen darkness of my years.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Responsibility**

We have thought deeply;
Our responsibility ends
When we leave this place;
It will be such a relief.
We click our tongues;
We wear our oldness
On our hanging selves.
The symmetry remains
Wholly outside our grasp,
Whatever we do still.
Beams of yellow light
Flood our parks, our eyes.
Those pixels are getting lost,
From our translucent skies
When we lie under the sky
Squiggly worms no longer
Swim behind closed eyelids.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Reverse View**

Up there a pair of keen eyes
An involuntary twitch of beauty
A taut screwing of eyeballs
Consciousness flowed this way
A white shirt, a speck of black hair
From behind the parapet wall
He sees me whole, flooding my being
In horizontal ether-filled space
He happened half a century ago
While I exist, here, in finite space.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Rhythm**

The voice flows
Like clear water
Some times flowing
In thin trickles
Amid boulders
Made for it
And dying for it
Making music.
You want to make
Music of the spheres
Right here, in the way
The body crouched,
Amid polygonal shapes
Amoeba-like
And free flowing
Where is the rhythm?

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**river noise and river silence**

river noise and river silence
swept by leaning trees and rocks
carry ashes of our living since dead
rice balls are carried in rapid water
reaching distant rivers in hills
our fire is lighted, our rice cooked
for our no longer kin but airy spirits
we chant strange words, sonorous
words that release airy nothings
from real bondages, strange.
words are airy nothings too
the body is nothing, just sleeps
and it turns into ice and ashes
swathed in ice that holds body
while it does not smell, quietly
bodies that look at the sky
disappear the next morning
in ashes of flowing water
we tried to collect two urea bags
full of she who bore us into the world
the boat enters midstream
without looking back we hurl her
her ribs were trying to hold
after the fire they are cinders
we scoop her in our bags
all the while we chant strange words
that mean nothing to us or to her
our words are ashes, our love ashes
a bag of yellowed bones

(my mother’s death)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Romance**

She looked through the corners of her beady eyes
As the mock- intensity of his fierce gaze unsettled her
He smelled of musty caves hiding heaps of shrieking bats
That time he had smelled of freshly bedewed grass
Enough were the chemical exchanges between their souls
A thousand doubts wracked her brains and thoughts
Their summer-hot bodies intertwined meaninglessly,
As his  arms covered the precipitous down of her belly
Her glassy eyes pretended to half-close in rapture.
The soft silk sheets of yesterday were there all over;
The flowers on the calico faded to a mixture of kitschy colors.
Then his voice had floated on rooftops and palm-fronds
Like golden-winged butterflies drunk with viscous nectar.
Close the windows please, his Adam's apple moved up
The fan whirred listlessly from the wooden ceiling
The lizard stuck its tongue out to catch an unwary moth.
I see an aura of death; the holes of his eyes were full of it
I can  smell death in the folds of his clothes, she thought.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Self-Helping Women**

Young ebony–skinned women
In cheap synthetic saris
With Kajal overflowing the edges
Of pools of laughing eyes
And jasmines in their hair
Came in droves to receive loans
The cacophony of their voices
Drowned the monotone of speeches.

The animator, a midget of a woman,
Herded her flock of giggling women
To a corner of the stage.
Woman after woman came
With folded hands to receive sanctions
The leaders gave fiery speeches.

A banker–poet sitting on the dais
Cleared his emotion-laden throat
Nothing came out of his poetic throat.
The proud women, queens of Sheeba,
Spoke eloquently, confidently
Of economic empowerment,
Marginalization of the money-lender.
Self-help was a magic word;
The husbands battered them?
The wives refuse to be touched
For a fiver by liquor-guzzler husbands.

The poet-banker called it instantly
A successful micro-credit experiment
The illiterate women found him
Vague and amusing, nevertheless,
Flushed with newfound money-power.
The money-lender became a pariah
Surely a revolution is in the making.

*(At a function held to disburse loans to members of village -level self-help women's groups

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Shadows**

The shadows were cool liquid and sensuous
Dense in the core but undefined in the edges
They were not like the morning shadows
Warm and expectant under the April sun
They were not even like the afternoon shadows
Stentorian shadows striding behind you
They touched your heart, tingled your skin
Tousled your hair and teased your mind.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Sideshow**

Things happened here, flowing from me
The stage was set for my eventful existence
Other things happened elsewhere, other time
Couldn’t you hear the loud thump of my feet
Amidst the muffled creaking of bones
My world was self-defined, its contours preset
But my luminous eyes looked far beyond
The other small mimes did not matter
Only their laughter rang intermittently in my ears
As though they were the main shows
But now as the frilled curtain goes down
My closed eyelids belie my substantial existence
A cotton swab in my nostrils cuts off my air
There are other things, other creatures, other shows.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Sitting in a car on a rainy evening in Bhopal**

Evening rain glistens on the road
As bread is bought and bananas are
Turned over for ripeness and less ripeness.
The rain is dancing on the car roof;
From the car the camera tries to catch
The wet sun on the leaves of the corner tree
Soon the wipers catch fever and quickly
We make our way in a sea of umbrellas.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Sivakasi**

Here a horse-borne King had faltered
Stopped abruptly by the Queen's purple flow
The bilwa leaves had become dark green
The phallus-God shall be installed here
Brought all the way from the banks of death
The desire-cow refused to move any further
Its udders were full with the sweetest milk
Everything must go on unhindered, Shiva-inspired
All is ripe for love, ripe for death.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Sleep**

This creature of the earth
Sleep-talks to himself
Nobody has heard him.
As the temple bells ring
The earth burns slowly
And goes up in swirls of smoke
These lights hurt him
But the smoke does not.
It is just like then
Of comforting mother-softness
Of all-around emerald aqua.
His limbs do not move.
Nor do his eyes see.
At the tunnel’s beginning
It is like what it was
When it all began.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Smoke**

Beyond the gray hills
Thick white smoke
Rose in a column.
From my vantage
My glass eyes saw
Veiled habitations
Heard voices rising
In musical supplication
Drum-beats quickened
Existence went up in smoke.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Songs**

She sang all sorts of songs
Infused with meaning, at times
Celebrating; at other times, cerebrating
She caught the essence of rhythm,
Some times bewilderingly different
As though the very nature of things
Could have been something else
And followed a different logical course.
There were so many other ways
Of penetrating the core of sound.

Mesmerized by alternative rhythms
Embodying other approaches to life
She wanted to change  history
And the uninterrupted  flow of life
Executing brilliant rhythm patterns.
She hoped to get at the Truth
By artful manipulation of sound
Through a blind trial and error,
Or through an endless deduction
A beyond-logic, unpatterned rhythm.
Her songs took  turns and twists
They followed the Big Logic
Just a beyond-logic derived from
The idea of cosmic creation itself.
Her dreams did not end there
Slowly her canvas came to life
As the evening tapered off to dusk.
She randomly vivisected the image
As a restless child would do and
 Ended up with  different faces.

Each face was a harmony in sound
The rhythm of life's logic was all there.
A random splash of resplendent colours
A digital manipulation of a puckered up face
Seemed to be approximating to Truth.
The essential Logic still eluded her
Being the logic of the Grand Dream.
Did she know why the faces were there
Why we were here to begin with
What if the Dreamer stopped dreaming
Or the Cause did not lead to Effect
One thing did not follow the other in time?

The night advanced slowly casting
Its ominous shadows on the faces
Outside her house the  tree shook gently
To the gentle tug of a dreamlike wind
Rustling through its  autumn leaves
The sky rumbled vaguely in the distance

Silver-lined clouds dissipated in the hills
The wind fizzled down in the night’s stillness.
.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Stillness**

He stands on the other shore
Beauty comes to us in waves
Up there, he rolls them, softly,
With hypnotizing hand-motions
The morning is gilded and mystical
There are now only gentle ripples
I sit alone in the hotel room
My limbs stiff and my mind still
After several acts of inane tokenism
I have failed to synchronize
The movement of my body cells
With the music of his waves.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Struggle**

There was fear all over;
Things happened very fast.
The body quickly gave way;
The sanitized walls closed in.
The lone crab struggled
In a puddle of scalding water
There were voices around
All happened in a split-second
When someone shouted
Pull him out, for God’s sake;
This is a mere dream.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Suicide**

There a bald man walked into the sea
The sea of emptiness beyond the window
Wanting to get back to the mother fast
Inside, a greedy woman, a son in fog
At the end of the street they all disappear
Where there is a blind turn, a dead-end.

(Upon hearing the news of the suicide of a relative)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Sunrise**

The sun's rays touched her and went up
Penetrating the trees and then the sky
I saw that happening, often, behind her
A gentle yellow light touching her warmly
This morning the sun came down quickly
From behind the wall, through the boulders,
Bouncing off the golden border of her sari
Flooding my inner glass eye with light.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## Sunrise and flowers

In my nights of waiting
For sunrise and flowers
I look pain in the face
I struggle to think in flowers
And rising orange suns
My night then fizzles down
With its false props to pride
At five I wake up bleary-eyed
Trying to catch beach suns
Before they turn white.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Tales of the Sculptures: Krishnapuram temple**

A petrified man-beast
Had a sense of fair play
The princess sniggered prettily
On the hunter’s abducting shoulders
A laughing monk mocked
At the Sinhala princess’ love
Everything here is topsy-turvy
The monk grinned ear to ear
The celebration continued endlessly
There was no end, only a beginning
There was a twinkle in lotus-eyes
And a flutter of her eyelids
So many bones, so much dust.
The monk celebrated  transience
Laughing at the ephemeral reality
That began as a mere idea
In the artist’s chaotic mind
The artist’s power did not matter
The princess’s love did not matter
The laughter began the end.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Terror in a cafe**

Reluctantly we set down
 Rilke’s autumn is falling
As are his hand and my eyes
Surely somebody up there
Is holding the earth up
And the sky and the stars
And all else from falling
Except in the Leopold café
Where bodies fall from behind
Which have just eaten roti
Should they now eat rice?
If only they knew that
Rice would make them fall.
A young man with rucksack
Has his view, other thoughts
He does not approve rice
There is a gleam in his eye
He likes bodies autumn-falling.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Testament**

An absurd little sleep-walker
Now sleeping, now waking
Sweeping the dusty corners
Of my senile mind, I gladly
Pass on this inheritance.

Decrepit and withered
I stand near the Dark Tunnel
A pretty little low-cost house
Still remains in the back-yard
Of my cluttered mind
So pretty, such fine roof-tiles
The drawings are still fresh
The problem of rural housing
Is solved at one stroke.

Memories of long years
Blend imperceptibly
With fears of the unknown
As I rake in the autumn-leaves
Of unrealized dreams
My brain goes dead
My body degenerates
But I still retain my sanity
Enough to recognize
The contours of my dream-house

It will be such a fine project
This model will revolutionize
Low-cost rural housing changing
The face of rural India.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## The afternoon sounds

A lonely worker chipped away at the neighbor’s roof,
A leaking roof between the sky and my neighbor
When the sky poured torrents of rain on his head.
The hammer-beats echoed in the hollow afternoon,
Interspersed by a yellow-black bird’s tireless notes.
The notes came from our dead standing brown tree
Which was still hosting beautiful yellow-black birds,
While awaiting final execution by the municipal Axe.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The ageing film star**

Then was different
Of different hue
And music.
Her eyes spoke
Of liquid love
Her leathery skin
A graveyard
Of skin-memories.
There are holes
Where were pools.
Her eyelashes
Flutter like
A bat’s wings
Embers of selfness
Still smolder.
Unreturned love
Yet another cover
For bruised ego.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The blue kurunji flower**

These questions came up early
Thoughts streamed in, interrupted
By a bizarre subterranean logic
They have gone away vacating space
Here, on the ground, there is space
Where there was a vaulting dome
The elephants cried  in streaming tears
Shuffling and stamping chained feet
I see a one-legged crow sitting, quietly,
On the cable that bridged vast silences
The only link between then and now
Between man and humankind.
We had gone in  the  deep forest
Looking for a blue kurunji flower
That bloomed once in twelve years.
There was empty space everywhere
There was no kurunji flower in sight
That ebony-backed tribal laughed
And denied there was any such thing.
We do not believe him in our dreams
The old forest guard told us the last time
He had seen the tree in bloom
We shall wait for the next season
Twelve years shall pass in no time
There will be magnificent pageants
In this space of time in this place
We shall barter innocence for beauty.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Body**

The body lay there in the room
With flies and people buzzing
The pale face looked indifferent
Tomorrow it will go down
Into the bowels of the earth.

Yesterday night he was busy
Searching for a quick-fix solution
To his life's problems in the
Froth of the golden yellow brew.

The body had a fatal hunger
Just like the woman in its life.
Scoops of dust settled on the coffin
It had no complaints about life.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The crows**

Our dark symbols largely cry out at midnight
When the streetlight’s crooked shadows fall
On the half-lit roofs and cement water tanks.
They had smelt of darkness during the day
Their wings now flap from the coconut’s darkness.
At the unlit corner where awareness takes blind turn
We secretly launch the struggle against these birds
Which have shied away from our rice balls.
Our ancestors have listened to our Sanskrit prayers
They should come as crows to eat their fill
Our rice balls are on the wall amid broken glass
We cant let them starve in the other-world.
This year on the death-day the crows visited us
Just like all these years but their beaks refused
To touch our carefully rolled rice balls
We pray to all our ancestors who had disappeared
On the burning sands of the waterless river.
We hope the crows will eat our rice next year.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The dam**

Then, at the dead of the night
The waters rose and swelled
To the high mud embankment
And spilled over to the village.
The mountains calmly looked on
While a flying chariot-in-flames
Had sheared their edges smooth.
The river swelled with pride
As rain poured into catchments
In the rugged  mountain ghats.

The river is now bound within banks
Tamed by a man-made monstrosity.
There is no excitement of spate
It is now so much brown sand
And thin streaks of shallow water.
These days funeral fires rage
On the hot sun-baked river-bed.
On the annual festival days
Tens of thousands of merry- making
Peasants and townsfolk, alike,
Congregate on the brown sand
To celebrate their God's birthday.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The death of a woman**

She stared at the wooden beam
The wood that was once a tree
A tailless lizard came from
Behind the wooden beam and looked
At her for the seventeenth time
kitta kitta kitta said the lizard
She who had become 'it' stared
Unremittingly at the wooden beam
At the beam that was once a tree
The beam looked at the tailless lizard
The continuum flowed endlessly.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The decision**

The afternoon shadows
Have slowly vanished
We have yet to decide
Our future and theirs
The evening is full of
Uncertain despondency
Nothing is clear, not even
Where we stand in the scheme
Perhaps we don’t exist
Or, may be, we do
Who knows, who can tell
There is a gentle rustle
In the coconut frond
Our hand fans fail to
Stir the wind around
Outside, in the garden
The squirrel runs up the tree
Soon a half-eaten guava
Falls to the ground
This very moment
We don’t understand
We are unable to decide
Soon the night will be on us
The crickets will chirp
As if nothing has happened
The crows will retire
Noisily to their nests
As if a gunshot is heard
Over the trees and rooftops
We have seen it many times
And heard it from our fathers
This is not the first time
We are entirely paralyzed
In our face and mind.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The elephant-God**

Before the onset of winter
Our dear elephant-God arrived
The beginningless God presided
Over every worldly beginning
Rising from the mud-peelings
Of our own Magnificent Mother
He laughed at the annoying
Asymmetry of the imperfect world
The moon mocked at his belly
That rocked with food and laughter.
The crowds cheered their clay-God
Painted in kitschy acrylic colors
And national pride was restored
Amidst cacophonous film music.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The fashion parade**

Swan-like, she floated exuding
Unthinking sensuous charm,
The eyes not once fluttered
Being pools of sad knowledge
Nobody noticed her lack of back
She never had it anyway.
The body never had it so good
Her perfume never smelt so fragrant
She wanted her hair, all in a mop,
To stand between her and infinity.
The smoothness of her limbs
Gravitated towards imperfect circles.
She took weird geometric shapes
Vivid colors, alabaster textures
Mind-boggling geometric shapes
Jutting out, obtrusively, in space
Crying out in lack of harmony
Mysterious high-decibel sounds
Touching your feeling-innards
Harsh and jangling colors emerging
In painful dissonance in the being
She wanted the world at her feet
Her feet, high in the air, levitated
Gracefully in men’s hearts and minds
Her heady fame and glamor formed
An amber magnetic field around her.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The firangipani flowers**

The firangipani tree bloomed
In my village temple compound
And where it hurt it bled milk
Just as it had done in my childhood.
I smelt God through the peephole
Of a child’s memory enclosed
By the fragrance of its flowers.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The frog**

With hot spring-rolls we plunked into chairs
To watch waves after waves of silver rain
As the night deepened frogs croaked in unison
From shallow puddles on the edge of the road.

She looked at me as if I was a slimy toad some way
Connected to the throaty frogs from the puddles
The towel on her bunned hair came off suddenly
Between me and her was this inky curtain of darkness.
Her lips curled and twisted in pretended anger
Where were the little flakes of snowy promises
That glistened on my  hair in the afternoon sun?

The little flakes melted in streamlets of airy nothing
And formed pearl-drops on the frog-back of carnality.
At the dead of the night the frogs stopped croaking
Readying to sleep  for the night and I dared not
Look at her forehead where lay my innermost secrets.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Guava Tree**

She pretends she does not limp
Resting a hand on the wobbly knee
Her bones could be heard creaking
She does not acknowledge this.

The shopping is utterly irresistible.
Her sister is gone; she is next in line
See the bone-dry fear in the whites of her eyes
But why talk of death, probable leave-taking?
These people have sinister designs
To deprive her of the joy of being alive.

The last time she went shopping
She had a minor sprain in her ankle
The doctor made such a ruckus
Come to think of it, she believes
She could cook food for twenty
A walking stick? Who needed one?

A thought comes like a yellow
Autumn leaf riding down layers of air
Her sister is gone; she is next in line.
But she has a lot of work to do yet
There is so much to celebrate -

The resplendent colors of crisp cottons
And the sheer joy of feeling their sheen
And a thousand other joyful flippancies
One could haggle deliciously while feeling
Their smooth texture and complain of quality
A Saturday shopping expedition followed by
Hot snacks at the roadside restaurant
Warm summer days of family reunions
Ambient evenings of perfumed weddings.

She crinkles her eyes to peer through
The sky-spaces of the old guava tree
In the backyard of her ancient house
It is all the same; nothing has changed
So much to do and so much to celebrate.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Hampi rocks**

The evening swapped the orange sky
For a silver-lined cloud in tatters
The rocks had sizzled through the day
At sundown their fever subsided
Their blazing orange desires ebbed
In the nucleus of their inner being
Time had burnt them to perfection
Beyond the pale of their stony selfness
Their sun-smell touched the bushes
Quickening life in their brown limbs
As the sun sank behind the world’s edge
Their shadows vanished in the sky.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Hanging of a Child-rapist**

A silver-locked man shook his head
That was a clinching moment
Darkness spread its wings
What was to happen, would.
The walls were closing in
Like they had been threatening
All these years, nights and moments
Their pale textures merged
Into the corners of his mind
The time has come to experience
Slow and painful unfilling of space,
Sudden and abrupt ejection into Time
Just like that little girl, you see,
Whose piercing cries precipitated
His own descent into hell
On the other side of the glass wall
Her lips seem to be moving
He cannot read them, now,
The mists on the glass thicken.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The heart attack**

There, dark  portentous air filters
Through hair-like leaves of the tree.
Fear trembles with deathlike finality
Clenched fists cry vengeance
On blood-draining arteries
Ghosts of people swirl around me
Claustrophobic walls are closing in
I have known it coming like that time
I have told you so many times
You did not believe me and now
You look at me incredulously as if
I have not warned you in advance
These specters in long white gowns
Decide my future in hushed whispers
Their smoky whiteness is enveloping me
Their shadowy medical epithets falling
Like lightweight feathers of a bird in flight-
Just like it was at that time when
I was muscling my helpless way through
Your incredible all-around mother-softness
Now that I am growing into nonexistence
Tell me what I should do with these
Useless brilliant multi-colored shadows
I have been chasing all these days.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The interview**

One went into deep slumber fully aware
The air did not touch nor melodiously sing
The tweet of the gray bird went over and again
As the helpless chick tried to find way
Hemmed in by clusters of grass squares
The mind’s baby gurgled as if threatening
It got mixed up in the easily penetrable skull
The story of someone deeply drowning
Hold your breath and flap your wings
While your daughter’s saving dupatta floats
The elephant-God whispered in your ears
As the sun went down the shimmering lake
We all waited impatiently to be hurt deeply
The head headshrinker asked searing questions
Pretending petrified wisdom of the pure mind
The phantoms went their way, their job done.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Juggernaut**

We had stolen their God
From their  jungle homes
We had needed Him more.
We then made Him lovingly
In soft river loam and in wood
From deep deciduous forests
In our own absurd likeness
A pathetic approximation
To our imagined perfect God.

The holes of our eyes
Brimmed with salty tears
We had made him so much
In our ludicrous likeness
Not knowing what he is like.
We cut off his hands and feet
And removed his eyelids
He was still not unlike us.

He entered our confused souls
And our cow-dung-smeared homes
His burning chariot now trundles
Relentlessly over our fragile bodies.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The kitchen (A tribute to woman)**

We liked her much and her ethereal self
She carried her transience about her
As though it was a long flowing toga
For her transience was a settled matter
Of evolution, in Darwin and burlesque
Just a comedy of sorts, full of sarcasm
Surely the world was made in her kitchen
Apparently he could not make a fine job
Actually when she laughed it was at him
Not that she was afraid of him, except
In the spirit-smell of a buttocks- injection
When she had a creepy feeling in her belly.
Things seemed to happen by a strange logic
A beyond-logic one failed to nail down
Everything got mixed, things and words
Stewed in an orange light, an unreality
Being light up there, the force of gravity low.
Above all this woman thing was God-like
The mother of all, who suffered for children
Who have once lived in her puffed- up belly
And for strange men she met in the corridor.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The last lecture**

In Randy Pausch’s last lecture there is space
Left briefly only to be occupied all time-
The space that will exist all time, lacking
In substance like a quarry in the hillock,
Which exists as long as the hillock lasts.
Let us imagine the quarry hole filled with dark
And you stand on the rim of the hole that exists
In absence of space and presence of time.
As you continue to hit tangentially the last lecture
You do not get into the Randy Pausch’s circle
The circle of an inspiring cancer death
The circle of dark quarry humor with a twist
You merely stand on the rim and lean into the dark
Straining your eyes to see own reflection down there.

(Randy Pausch’s Last Lecture: Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The laughing club**

The men and women here laugh
For no particular reason, really.
They cannot help it, however.
They belong to the laughing club
Other people hurt yet other people
Everybody laughs for no reason
Endowed with a free lower jaw.
They cannot help it, you will agree.

(Watching the laughing club in Bhopal Ekanth park)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Manikarnika ghat**

These people have come here
To solve existence problems
On the river that washed sins,
Human bodies and buffaloes.
They came from a far off river land
Where sins are equally washed.
They are wearing dark glasses
And their lungis above kneecaps.
They speak an ancient tongue
And eat mounds of liquid rice.
But when their boat reaches
Within sight of the Manikarnika ghat
They are deeply afraid in their eyes
Like you, me and our ancestors.

(Watching a boatful of Tamil pilgrims on the holy river of Ganges in Varanasi)

(Manikarnika ghat is the ghat (river steps)  where one meets life and death: it is the cremation ghat on the Ganges in Varanasi.It is believed that the soul will attain liberation if the body is cremated here.)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The memoirs of a Geisha**

The geisha had eyes like rain.
There was laughter in her eyes
That looked the color of rain.

Just an artist of the floating world,
She dances sings keeps men happy
She is just a half-wife of nightfall
The rest is shadow, the rest secret.

Thank god it is just her memoirs
Just an afternoon movie on the telly.

(The memoirs of a geisha, a film)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The miners have come**

Then the mountains fell silent.
The leafless shrubs pretended
They did not exist, waiting for
The mountain’s endorsement
Of their terrestrial existence.
The night’s silence broke through
Stacks of brown mountains
The wind blew in their faces
As though it was flowing water
And the monsoon had arrived
The fact is that the monsoon
Has already come and gone
There was no water flowing
Only hot brown sandy space
With the west wind whirling in it.
The cloud that would bring water
Has already come and gone
And there would never be water
Only blood from recent wounds.
After they have come and gone
There will be large circular holes
You stand on their rims guessing
Where their inky darkness ended.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The morning after the train journey**

In the morning it all came back, awake
From the dream, the planet called the earth
The birds chirped among new-born buds
Their colors spoke interminably of dreams
The earth spun eons ago as blazing fire
Its firmament arched over the dreams
I had dreams cozily in my mother.
Atavistic centuries of blinding ignorance
Clouded over mankind’s bloated egos
Where it all began, thinking, thought;
Under our feet was hell let loose
When some billion years I have lived
Without a song, my hair disheveled
Me and microbe being of the same stock.
I had dreams of a magic, a mere thing
Waiting to become a mere thing
Just like a rock of inorganic cells
A few chromosomes carry all memories
Of my primordial world, of giant-sized eggs
You see I have invented a reed bringing forth
The finest smelling finger hole music,
Smelling of oil-lamp flames extinguishing
In ancient temples behind closed doors.
I have invented golden- robed gods smiling
In flower decked finery, with vermilion
On my forehead where it is all written.
I have invented half-burnt corpses flowing,
In flames, on fragrant heaven-promises
This morning the reed vanished abruptly
In the fragrance of the river’s shadows.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Nilgiris  -a leaf from the poets diary**

In the blue mountains
Passions do not rise high
The mountains gently shake
Tall shimmering silver oaks off
The wind in their hair.
These  matronly mountains
Squat pretty in the valleys
Wearing their best velvets
The air here is tea-fragrant
As magical woman-fingers
Pluck two leaves and a bud
And hurl them into baby-baskets
Time  hangs lightly between
Sips of tepid C.T.C. tea.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## The Palm Trees in Our Village

These palm trees cogitate in groups,
Just as our mild-mannered cattle do,
Casting their dark brooding shadows
On the limpid waters of our paddy fields
In the sowing season their shadows
Tickle our women’s delicate feet
Submerged in soft knee-deep slush
When our fields are shorn and brown
Our palms proudly sport golden fruit
This male one in the shadowy corner
Sports no fruits, only leafy extensions
We love it all the same for its  shade.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## The paper

That was a mere red-banded paper
Itching to reclaim original state
With absolutely no musical possibility
As lonely as our drooping eyelids
Behind the vacuous legal scroll
Some faded white trousers reiterated
Black legal existence and bow tie
Our sleep-together of fearsome nights
Leapt out of the window cat-silent
Into the sterilized portals of wordy law
Our mummified before was not this
Our after-thoughts slowly cauterized us
As we waited for the black decision.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The pastor and his niece**

The pastor’s mind is dark as a moonless night.
In it she is a sepulchral figure, cold as death.
Some times, on certain moonlit nights
As the world becomes unbearably beautiful,
She looks far, far away as he talks about God.
And she suddenly laughs and hugs him.
That is when the pastor becomes father.

He sees their silhouettes in the pale moonlight.
There has got to be reasons why God created
Pastor’s nieces and boy friends and moonlight.

(On reading Claire de Lune
A short story by Guy De Maupassant)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The peak in Hong Kong**

Here we talk on the peak, about the peak
And some times walk gloriously on the peak
In summer our performance peaks in the peak
As tiny white lights glitter through the dark
The stars peak in their glittering performance.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The photographer's quest**

First, beauty seemed to come back
In capillary-like, bird-flying transience
As the orange orb came up shaking
In gray rocks and tentative leaf-ends
It is the sleeping rocks that glowed
Their contours passionately etched
Against white houses in blue spaces.
We had tiptoed all the way to the hillock
As the trees looked down on us, clinging,
Their foliage witness to our fecund follies.
Our thoughts remained in their bounds
Our images shreds of a few fluffy clouds
The search ended in several fiery pixels.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The plastic curtain**

Between us falls this plastic curtain
with tiny floral prints and glistening droplets
I see your lips moving through the interleave.
there is work, overdue debts, deja vu
there, on the riverbed, a thought came-
no words, only an electrical presence.
nothing much has happened, then and now
will you repay my fifty rupees to the barber
for the hair which once was, flowing in the river
to the oceans, its sound muffled by the waves.
I only appear in dreams on restless pillows.
On the other side are flowers etched in plastic
they don’t perfume beyond the riverbed.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The poet stands upright in his pants**

Bukowski’s lady had him off the bottle
He now tries sundaes of different flavors
Now he does not have to listen to Mozart
Shostakovitch and other classical bloke
Through a surreal haze of smeared smoke
He now feels cool like the ice cream people.
Above all he stands upright in his pants.

http: //hellopoetry.com/poem/the-icecream-people/#ixzz0vbAOS0XJ

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Rain**

On the hills everyone’s courage failed
That meant a clean break from the past
A clear-cut informed decision in the rain
A prophet sat right there, cross-legged,
Smiling in the polished marble vault
The decadent city dropped away gradually
In the semantic vagueness of the general rain
The lovers promptly lost their pristine bodies
In the fecund continuity of the falling rain
A little rain-girl smiled beatifically
In the blue and green of her eyes
There was no tentativeness in their slant.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Resolution**

That time the script was promptly made
And sealed, waiting to be enacted and, later,
In the marshy outreaches of my somnolence
There arose several original questions
Of ethical propriety and logical integrity
The bit players seemed to evolve differently
When awareness took an abrupt turn
The leading up to and the denouement got lost
As always, I have to start all over again.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Return of Beauty**

Things remained unsaid
Over a long gap, a wide chasm
Beauty cried in torrents
Of words bereft of thought
Till the blazing March sun
Beat  history's stones
A midsummer celebration
Ensued with images galore
Beauty returned from the hills.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The River of Desire**

On the banks of the River of Desire
The abodes of our Gods are empty
The Gods deserted our village long ago
Leaving behind all the sanctums
Their broken walls yielded fine bricks
For the masonry of our village homes.
The River meandered around our village
Threatening to swallow our temples
Our children have hunger in their eyes
We have no oil to light God’s lamps
The River now threatens to swallow
Our parched paddy fields and our homes.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The roadside bathers**

The water of life streamed
Through the broken roadside tap
The sun burned like a death-fire
On bodies, bloodless and charred.
The white cloth clung to flesh
Laying bare embers of lost hopes
Unceasing the water flowed
Onto the soap-lathered bodies
And thence into the foul gutter
If only time went reverse
These ebony bodies would love
To swim back to the safety
Of that primeval water body
From where they had journeyed here
A journey back from fire to water.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## The rock

The drill cut through the rock
Until there was no rock
Only a bluer sky.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The schizophrenic**

My splintered consciousness is
A jumble of broken images
Shards of shattered tough-glass
Pierce through attempts at order;
Dark and threatening circles
Close in on my eyes, concentrically.

My muscular male arms
Negate my  femininity
Sometimes I am male,
Sometimes i am female
Sometimes I am me,
Sometimes somebody else.

In my unified moments
I attempt in vain to gather
Pieces of broken glass
For a many-hued kaleidoscope
The kaleidoscope is a dream
I only collect bleeding injuries.

My soul lies inert, in a glass jar
In the amniotic fluid of  confusion
As material for neuro-scientists
Cushioned in chaos, there I lay
Afraid  the jar would break one day.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The sea**

You were talking about walking, barefoot,
Into the sea, with orange fires between eyes
She was last seen behind the customs warehouse
Chanting skeptical mantras with a lisp
Lips trembling with fearful doubts
The shadows there gobbled her up
Actually the sea only gobbles up shadows.
As had happened with that man
Who returned bloated at high tide
You see we have never worshiped
These small Goddesses who become angry
There a bald man walked into the sea
The sea of emptiness beyond the window
Wanting to get back to the mother fast
Inside, a greedy woman, a son in fog
At the end of the street they all disappear
Where there is a blind turn, a dead-end.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The secret of Chidambaram**

Nothing is clear, nothing whatsoever
What is deep inside the cosmic-embryo
Remains buried under consciousness
Where lies the tantalizing secret
As warm tears well up in the eyes
Imposing stone archways open one by one
The fog-screens fizzle down slowly
Only to reveal the ether of nothing
The Chidambara secret slowly unfolds
In the vaulting dome of a nothing-sky
As the primordial God dances in rapture
Whom neither fire singes nor poison burns
A yellow flame flickers amid pealing bells
Under a golden dome over empty space
It is the empty space that defies Time
Then three thousand God’s men flash across time
Their bejewelled women step out of the dome
With the flame of knowledge between their brows
And silver music on their dancing anklets.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The sex worker**

I had my colored dreams
Which smelt so pretty good
You know on these evenings
I take out my oldest dreams
Like fine-smelling old clothes
At the bottom of my steel trunk.
It feels good to smell them
And put them back in a hurry
For fear of losing their smell.

I have seen it happening
And have stopped caring.
The worms of his fingers
Are crawling  on my belly
As I  duly close my eyes
 In pretended  half-rapture.
I have enacted perfectly
The sounds of the explosion
In the inner spaces of body
As thick dark smoke rises
From my body and spreads
Towards the dome of the sky
Obfuscating the orange sun.

Then I climb the roof to hear
The crickets take over the night.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The shadow**

First the silence of the hills
Echoed in my closed ears
As if they existed outside of me
The tall casuarinas called out
Yet remained chillingly silent
The valleys dripped with mist
The mountains lay noiselessly
Stacked one upon another
The eagle broke their silence
A shadowy figure smiled at me
Through the morning’s silence
These trees became gnarled
The salt had blackened their leaves
From out of the mangroves came
The growl of my own royal tiger
I have to conserve this species
Then came the sound of the drums
I have to preserve this culture
And the flame of my spirituality.
My body cried out for pleasures
My soul for otherworldly attainments.
He walks down the afternoon streets
In wooden slippers under a palm umbrella
Sending down gentle reminders
I can clearly hear his footsteps
Down the rain-soaked streets, lanes
My unfinished jobs here are many
I have yet to resolve contradictions.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The sister rocks**

The sister rocks woke up
To the sun's golden touch
Their delicate fingers
Reached out, reaching,
Beyond the temple towers,
Into the translucent sky
Fond sisters they were
In close familial bond
Their smoky eyes filled
With slowly sun-melting dew
Their sisterly shadows
Lengthened luxuriously
Over night-weary shrubs
As hundreds of other shrubs
Were being set on fire
On the edge of their world.

(Two giant rocks in Hampi stand leaning towards each other at the top, their silhouettes looking like two fond sisters hugging each other. Hence the name “sister rocks “)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The skull-pot**

I sit here on the precipice
With my feet dangling
In the dark abyss of time
On the far-line I espy
A pile of neatly stacked skulls
Of large circular eyes
With the mountain air
Hissing through them.
You see other skulls had thoughts
When their holes were eyes,
That wished no brains in them.
Wonder what  the old man thought,
When lying on a string cot,
He saw the smile of death
Where the banyan met the sky.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Song**

The sound settled on our core
Touching our conscious, our self
The body meant everything to us
Metallic music poured forth
From yellow discs in fevered rhythm
As our sepulchral child-egos rose
Our consciousness flapped its wings
We only rise once over the clouds
Our waxen wings melt too quickly
But our memories remain of flying.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The statue of Gomateswara**

He interrupted us, smiling,
In our endless dreams,
In the infinite space beyond
Where the eagles soared.
The earth came alive
Where his feet touched.
Thick conical leaves
Intertwined with his legs
To hide his splendid nakedness
From the sleeping world.
We felt small as if
We had to remain silent
While the earth came alive.

(The statue of Gomateswara, a Jain saint stands tall at Shravanabelagola in Karnataka- the world’s biggest monolithic statue constructed in the 10th century)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The sun-photographer**

It is this luminosity, my dear,
Of the gilded leaves in the sun
The magic eye promptly catches
A silver flicker, a yellow transience.
A palliative to the chemical pain
In variously knotted entrails and
The reddish tinge in eye-whites.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Taj Mahal**

There is this woman-question, as ever
She shrieked out from the bowels of Time
Fluttering her soulless eyes in fiery anger
A megalomaniac emperor had embalmed her
And embedded her in cold marble vaults
The marbled beauty of the magnificent mausoleum
Smothered her inner self and left her cold
Just like this man’s fabled passion for her
A fourteenth child- birth was not for celebration
She had helped create his entity, lost her own.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Tanjore Paintings**

Women filled everywhere, spreading out
Their ashen faces and freezing stares
They broke through explosions of colors
On the centrestage, crying and laughing
They enacted several pantomimes
Their exaggerated eyes were pools of love
Strands of their hair cast mysterious shadows
On puffed up cheeks and elongated foreheads
There was this all-around woman-softness
Mothers, mistresses, maidens and all.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Tanjore sculptures**

The Tanjore sculptor had his bronze dreams
His women needed such impossible bodies
They burned silently in blazing hell-fires
Their midriffs bore marks of mutilating suffering
Their globular breasts weighed down their hearts
Their eyes drilled into you in dilated horror
They loved him for his obsessive perfection
Castigated him for causing cruelty to their flesh.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The temple**

Thinking never felt so good
Beads of perspiration glistened
While  peace arrived in spurts
Behind was electricity of high voltage
Words flowed steadily in thought
In fast disappearing streamlets
There was the power of fragrance
Of lighted camphor and tiny flowers
My people’s concentrated history
Flowed through these stone archways
Stone people who lived on forever
These are my own dearest kinsmen
My flesh and bones are made
Of the same powdered red rock
We worship the same granite god.

(At the Hazar Rama temple in the Hampi ruins)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Temple of Avinashi**

I stand, here, on the night’s edge
And come face to face with myth-
Mankind’s collective conscious
Through the hazy mists of time.
I see images of life and death
And  evanescent human existence
A poet sang his mellifluous song
Of regeneration, of reawakening
A boy rose from death’s nonexistence
The Lord of Time and Destruction
Restores to the Creator his powers
Here, both the poet and the Creator
Have regained their creative powers
The crocodile emerges from the lake
Yet another image of life-in-death.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The temple of Tenkasi**

Tuesday, September 14,2004

A gentle breeze blew over Tenkasi
Through a narrow mountain pass
Sprinkling fine stone dust all over
Innumerable were the chisel strokes
Stone after stone cried out in pain
A phallus-God had to come from afar
From the distant banks of death
The love-God wielding a sugarcane bow
Invited certain, fierce death by fire
The horrified wife froze in stone
A heap of yellow dust reached the skies.

A strong gust of wind blew from the hills
Spreading a dusty film over their oiled bodies
The celebration continued late into the night
When bewitching Beauty would marry Death
The horse-borne King faltered at the bilwa tree
Stopped abruptly by the Queen’s purple flow
The bilwa leaves had become dark green
All was ripe for love and ripe for death.
The artist who had reached the beauty’s end
Hid himself behind Time’s dusty haze.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Tirumala hills**

Here yawning time-distances shrink.
New chemical formulas emerge.
All that is thought logical merges
Into camphor-fragrant unreality
Words quickly change into things
Time stands immobile and petrified.
Bright yellow sampangi petals
Breathe fragrant life into the sky
Tall swaying red sandalwood trees
Tilt precipitously towards
The orange fringe of the western sky.
The holes of my eyes are filled
With salty tears like yesterday's
Abandoned  stone quarries
Fresh with pellucid rainwater.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Titiya bird**

When we were wee-boys, in knickers,
We threw pebbles at the mango tree for fruits
Later, demons came into our lives
In the morning, when the white birds in the sky
Whizzed past the tall palm trees behind our house
We called them out shaking our fingers at them
Thinking that little pieces of their milk-whiteness
Will somehow enter our pink fingernails
We tried catching the water snake by its tail
It swished the tail and mock-bit you
Making you think that you would soon be dead
The tamarind tree hosted hundreds of suicide-ghosts
At night little flickering flames floated in the air
From out of the phosphorous bones of the dead
Then a little bird flew over us, in our own sky,
With its mournful cry which said titiya
Our dear cousin looked up, lying sprawled
On the bamboo stretcher, with eyeballs screwed up
The whites of his eyes were inexplicably opaque
Nobody told us why he could not come with us
To hurl flat-stones on still water surfaces
To make them frog-jump three times over.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The train journey**

Together we need a respite from howling
In the inner depths of the train’s night,
Clackety clackety, inside full with feeling
I stir along with the train and thought
She the train better stop thinking violent
Not puffing like her coal-eater ancestor
While mind walks slowly like the blue bird
That went up and down on the telephone wire.
Train-fans stir cold wind and winter air
Shaking shadows of several recently fed men
Bringing out guttural sounds from sleep’s depths.
Dreams spoil their fun through monster bridges
And dark tunnels in the mountain’s wombs.
She writes her history on two parallel lines
In the black parchment all the while erasing it;
I collect exquisite shadows of the night’s silence.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The tsunami memory**

I saw her usurping chunks of the sky
That was some misty moments
And a thick orange sunset ago
A lone crow, sitting on the railing,
Surveyed the distant shoreline
When my  glass eye caught it
The blur of brown hills broke
The blue sea-sky continuum
She sat there still, seemingly human
Where was this blue benevolence
When little supplicating hands
Burst out of her rising white bosom
And tiny lotus-lungs gasped for air?

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The two of us.**

We have lived our lives together
We will, may be, die together
Some times I looked into your eyes
While I was giddy and drunk
With the intensity of my passions
The images there seemed unreal
I thought you had taken birth
And grew up in a small town
With a clearly defined purpose
You would complement me in life
Follow the illogic of my own life
The fact is you never really cared
For the multitudes of explosions
That took place in my inwardness.
Unaware of the chaos in my  being
You followed your own instincts.
Your sights were clearly set on
Things proximate and achievable.
I  always resented your indifference
But now in the twilight I recall
The sparkle I saw in your eyes
Whenever I entered your room
Or when my name was mentioned
That will endure till our death.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The white screen of death**

The power of death is palpable
Amidst disbelief, impossible reason
Unthinking brain-aliveness
I can see the yellowed feet
Jutting out of the white sheet
Fleeting flies gratuitously sharing
Fickle aliveness with the dead
Existence logic is devoid and white
Like the all-enveloping sheet.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The wind palace of Jaipur**

The soft pink of the wind palace
Does not jell with her poverty's
Blazing red tie-and-dye saree
Too kitschy for our proud art,
Too sentimental for our souls.
Let us have bright red bangles
They contrast better with the pink-
There is still poverty left in them.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Wishing Well**

With my back turned
I hurl stone after stone
Into the wishing well
Disturbing the frog's sleep
In its libidinous dreams.

My moon had fallen into the well
My pail could not bring it up
I continue to dropp stones
Someday the water will rise enough
To bring up my beautiful moon.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The woman**

Her shoulders wildly swung
To the left and the right
Her body surged ahead
In the crowds, above them
Life-force thinly transparent,
She emitted diode-rays
Feeling, thinking, making
She occupied all our spaces.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Woman In The Painting**

Lively watercolors
Vivid cool pastels
Become gray shadows
Eyelashes flutter languidly
In off-white background
She takes in the breath
Of saffron evenings.
The sun slowly descends.
Dots of steady-winged birds
Fly out of the canvas.
Shrill eagle-calls
Rupture the canvas
She shouts out, loud,
In not-so- audible decibels
Over the world’s cacophony
Embedded in experience
It is all the same, whatever
A rehash and a re-living
The experience stays
And the exquisiteness.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The Woman in the Picture**

The curtains are drawn
In a bizarre way, in a knot.
There are heaps of books
Book upon book, little hillocks
Good enough for eagles' view,
She looks down, calmly
She stands on a flat plane
Uniquely two-dimensional.
I try climbing the hillocks.
It is pretty dizzy over there
And her breath is ice-cold
Let me open the curtains
The sun is behind the hills.
The shadow of the hills
Grows minute by minute
And, silently, book by book.
The moon is peering through
The spaces between curtains
Touching the frayed edges
Of the hard bound tome.
The woman looks out of her
Trapped existence in frame
She had happened in time
Just a point in the plane of time
The same plane that passes
Through our own existence.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**The wooden nymph**

On a hot languorous Sunday afternoon
The nymph trembled under his touch
The finish of a half-formed symmetry
Was irritating and hurtful to the senses
See the crazy rebellious asymmetry
And the absurdity of the underlying ideation.
In fact, a different she had taken birth
In the anarchic aggregation of the artist’s mind
The wood is wieldy and the mind meandering
Everything changed so elementally, so quickly
These frequent changes are traumatizing
How she wished he followed a structure
His freedom of mind violated her own
All this rising rebellion came to naught
She melted under his delicate touch
While submitting to his artful manipulations.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Theme**

I am trying to find reasons
For silence. There is something
On my head, a towering gear
Smiling underneath is tough
All the time I have to balance
Against the whiff of wind
I am trying to find reasons
For speaking. When I find some
They are the same for silence
The headgear is precariously
Perched on my head, whichever.
The diamonds there glisten
In early morning silences
Between piercing train hoots
And old watchmen’s mutterings
I have now found my form
And my theme, my silence.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## Thinking poems

Thinking poems are autumn-falling
In criss-cross patches of golden sun,
Actually these are pallid ghosts
Pulled out of unlit eastern skies.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**this is no poetry**

these thickset days
are fizzling down
quick, especially

in the night air
the eyes bespeak
atrocities, unspeakable

the sound of leaves
whizzing through the thick
morning air, leafing

pages in weighty scriptures
ambivalent answers to
disjointed questions, unasked

celluloid horror
of a twelve-year-old girl
lying spreadeagled, shrieking

you lie spreadeagled in
the Mumbai-Hyderabad overnight
Volvo sleeperette, re-living

what all are the horrors
in the suburban train
three living-dead humans
watching a twelve-year-old
dying of  too much love.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**This September**

This September I have turned yellow and seventy
The sky's translucence no longer mystifies
By holding out hazy undefined amber promises
This air is still crisp and there is promise of
Excitement on the leafy floor of the forest
As the mongoose scurries among the yellow leaves
Tens of thousands of zany butterflies of many hues
Have burst out of the bushes on the Tirumala hills
Striking the stunned panes of the passing cars.

At night I open the window with rusty hinges
To feel the September  draught  resurrecting
The archived sensations of my withered skin
These limbs feel cheated of  pleasurable walks
On dirt tracks  lined with fragrant ketaki bushes
There is now not even fear churning in the belly
The  creaking bones, powdery and forgetful,
Cry out in sorrowful unison waiting for deliverance
My senile mind, at times agile, refuses to sleep
Unable to muffle the  burst of the creative voice
My sonorous monologues have no  listeners.

I sleep fitfully and  dream of the beyond
Of what lay beyond the Sahyadri mountains
Of the gusts of howling wind passing through
The swaying red sandalwood trees on the other side
And of the myriad mountain streams pouring

In steady trickles into innumerable check-dams

I think of death, the beginning of the tunnel

Not knowing where and when I would emerge

I am  at times afraid of the all-enveloping darkness

Darkness closing in slowly amid the staccato cries

Of  noisy crickets from invisible crevices.

I turn to my left and go back to self-obliterating sleep

It is only when I lie supine that I get my nightmares.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Thoughts at the Srirangam temple**

My people’s concentrated history
Flowed through these stone archways
Stone people who lived on forever
These are my own dearest kinsmen
And my flesh and bones are made
Of the same powdered red rock
We worship the same granite god.

(Looking at the exquisite sculptured figures on the Srirangam temple walls)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Through the keyhole**

The key would not turn
I  see through the keyhole
A shadow playing on the wall
The shadow moves towards another
Until they both become one
Playing the same music
Of life and death
Of death-in-life.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Time, again**

I was just asking time
Once again.
Because my words had fallen Into night.
They were not luminous.
When Rilke dropped them
They were.
But they fell into the same
Aggregate of darkness.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

## Train thoughts

You see the train fires our thoughts-
We find a white metallic sky up there,
As though the train itself were the earth
Spinning like a top in cosmic space.
The train’s hoot pierces our awareness.
We then come down from the upper berth
To mundane matters of trivial concern-
Thoughts which are not train thoughts
But home kitchen and patio thoughts
Waiting for inquisitive neighbours to talk
So that we could pick large comic holes.
In the train, between our finiteness and sky
There is another white sky, train sky
Under which several celestial thoughts
Take place in our upturned sleeping faces
It is as though the metal sky does not exist
And we are faced with the Big sky itself.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Trains**

Trains take you to the empty spaces
Where orange fires raged the other day
And you could then collect the fire- dust
In the enclosed cup of your joined palms
And pour it in oblation into holy rivers
Which will take them to the green sea.

Trains bring people to river canals
Where death is a mere after-fact
Submerged in flowing green waters.
It is like what your life’s beginning was
When you were sleeping in your mother
Submerged in a sea of emerald aqua
With your eyes closed in green oblivion.

Trains take you through the sea of darkness
Holding you safely in their green wombs.
Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Transience**

At the vaulting dome waves refused to travel
Unless on a few pieces of silver and a name.
The flying metallic bird will take two full hours
These angels in turquoise will feed our appetites.
There is fear lurking in our minds behind bravado.
We try to shut out noises of after-death and failure
We blame ourselves for all our stupid failures
As though they really mattered to us and the dead.
We then read patterns in the grayed whys of decay.
As though the whole thing is a science of death
And we have nearly mastered the art of dying,
Of succumbing to the need to maintain transience.
We smugly wear the polyester film of transience about us
We read poetry in the trivial tragedies of their tatters.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Tribute to Bismillah Khan, the Shehnai maestro**

I had dreamt of a magic, a mere thing
Waiting to become a mere thing
Just like a rock of inorganic cells
A few chromosomes carry all memories
Of my primordial world, of giant-sized eggs
You see I have invented a reed bringing forth
The finest smelling finger hole music,
Smelling of oil-lamp flames extinguishing
In ancient temples behind closed doors.
I have invented golden- robed gods smiling
In flower decked finery, with vermilion
On my forehead where it is all written.
I have invented half-burnt corpses flowing,
In flames, on fragrant heaven-promises
This morning the reed vanished abruptly
In the fragrance of the river’s shadows.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

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Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Upon the death of a dear colleague**

He who knew my secrets is dead
In the field and on his house.
His own secrets are safe and secure
In the lock- and- key of my aliveness.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Urban legends**

Laughter echoed in sunbeams on empty roads
These walks resounded just like laughter
Their myths began ages ago, still evolving
Dinosaurs that took to the air, colored images
Picked on leaves' ends on sunny days.
The mountains walked further back, in blue
Their stories hidden in gaping quarry-holes.
Empty promises filled the void and the garden
There were no thoughts underlying, mysterious
Creativity became a big name, a mere promise
When lying with suspended reason and fever.
The images, freshly geometric, lacked body
Our consciousness streamed now and then
The holes were aplenty and the images broken
A copy of the reality was worse than reality
Art sounded as though there had been no life.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Voices**

Throughout the last season I heard disembodied voices;
This time around, sweet reason came back imperceptibly
When the jasmine bushes in our backyard started flowering
Symmetry in placement appealed to the inner logic
Spurning rebellion, passion-flowers bloomed extravagantly
Amidst persistent undercurrents of double-think, deep-within
Cliches still had no place, a rebel’s dementia disappeared
I actually looked forward to several dulcet tunes
The voices were of serene beauty, not of frozen death.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Waiting for a flight at Mumbai airport**

At the vaulting dome waves refused to travel
Unless on a few pieces of silver and a name.
The flying metallic bird will take two full hours
These angels in turquoise will feed our appetites

(Although Mumbai airport was wifi-enabled I could not access the internet)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Waiting for the boat**

They are unknown quantities;
they sit still in shadows and evenings.
sometimes they crouch expectantly
waiting to be reality-copied
they are huddled together
on the muddy shore of the lake
for boat and togetherness.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**What the old trees do not realize**

The trouble is they want to remain homes
To the many homeless evening-birds
Which incessantly chatter to slum kids
Pouring out of their improvised shanties
With tin roofs glistening in the sun.
They do not realize even in their death
That our gardener’s three-stone stove
Is waiting impatiently for their dry logs
To arrive in its enormous, crackling fire.

(Concerning a withered tree in our Bhopal house which were unwilling to fell even after its death because it was the home to several birds)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**What the trees do not realize**

The trouble with these old, gnarled trees
Still standing upright in the earth and air
Is that they want to remain homes
To the many homeless evening-birds
Which incessantly chatter to slum kids
Pouring out of their improvised shanties
With tin roofs glistening in the sun
Through old cycle tires and tarpaulin tatters
Kept defensively in place against the wind
By a motley collection of gray stones.
They do not realize even in their death
That our gardener’s three-stone stove
Is waiting impatiently for their dry logs
To arrive in its enormous, crackling fire.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Windows**

I try to open these windows
Their  hinges make creepy noises
As they open out, difficultly,
To endless vistas of light and shadow
The night queen bloomed below them
And I can smell the morning grass
Beyond the red-and-white sari
That hangs on the clothesline
Amid shattered pieces of the sky.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**words**

Words hit you like swarming flies
On a sticky summer afternoon
Words fester under your skin
Like wounds refusing to be healed
They enter your eyes like dust
Filling them with hot salty tears
You gather them like sea-shells
To empty the pocket and throw away
The moment you reach home
Words grate like steel furniture
Being dragged on a dusty floor
Words fill your tummy with nausea
Like the guts of a dog run over
By a passing truck on the highway
Words turn into a handful of dust.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Words are things**

Words are things, just like the translucent sky
Which, my grandmother says, is, in fact, a thing
The flowers in my courtyard are the blue sky
With new insect-stars appearing in the twilight
These are just like words, thingy and palpable
When they freeze under the leaves they become icicles
And when they verily thaw, they tingle your skin
And feel on your tongue like December snow.
Poetry- words are splinters of the same vitreous sky
The long arms of the morning sun spread warm words
As though the evening to come promises pure happiness
The ugly caterpillar eats beauty-holes in our garden leaves
Which are poetry- words scrawled in thick sticky leaves
And then they become fatter on the flanks with floral designs.
The stinking caterpillar then disappears beyond the fence
Leaving behind incandescent thingy poetry- words.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Wounds**

In the recent monsoon
Our rivers felt as if
The mountains had bled
From fresh wounds
Their flesh has gone,
Across the green seas,
To the distant Chinaman
To fill out his bones.

(Iron ore exports to China in the wake of the pre-Olympics construction boom have left deep wounds on our mountainscape in the Hospet region)

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**Yesterday's rain**

Our dear hibiscus  had stood upright
In wind and rain, not shedding a leaf
In the morning when we shook the tree
Tiny tingling raindrops fell like icicles
On our falling eyelids and extended tongues
Yesterday we were afraid of the fierce rain
Our dear tree stood between us and fear.

Jagannath rao Adukuri

**You, I and he**

You would wish to ask him why
Our friend’s son has not returned
From his bath in the Ganges.
You cannot ask such questions.
You can, of course, whisper them
Softly into the misty morning air
Standing on your toe on the railing
In the dizzying heights of the Qutub.
If and when you get your answers,
Please whisper them into my ears
Above the bazar din of Chandni Chowk.

(Concerning the death by drowning of a colleague’s young son in Roorkee)

Jagannath rao Adukuri