

Classic Poetry Series

Arun Kolatkar
- poems -

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Arun Kolatkar(1 November 1932 – 25 September 2004)

Arun Balkrishna Kolatkar (Marathi: अरुण बालकृष्ण कोलतकर) was a poet from Maharashtra, India. Writing in both Marathi and English, his poems found humor in many everyday matters. His poetry had an influence on modern Marathi poets. His first book of English poetry, *Jejuri*, is a collection 31 poems pertaining to a visit of his to a religious place with the same name *Jejuri* in Maharashtra; the book won Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1977. His Marathi verse collection *Bhijki Vahi* won a Sahitya Akademi Award in 2005. His *Collected Poems in English*, edited by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, was published in Britain by Bloodaxe Books in 2010.

Trained as an artist from the J. J. School of Art, he was also a noted graphics designer, with many awards for his work.

 Life

Kolatkar was born in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, where his father Taty Kolatkar was an officer in the Education department. He lived in a traditional patriarchal Hindu extended family, along with his uncle's family. He has described their nine-room house as

"a house of cards. Five in a row on the ground, topped by three on the first, and one on the second floor."

The floors had to be "plastered with cowdung every week".

He attended Rajaram High School in Kolhapur, where Marathi was the medium of instruction. After graduation in 1949, much against his father's wishes, he joined the J J School of art, where his childhood friend Baburao Sadwelkar was enrolled.

His college years saw a "mysterious phase of drifting and formal as well as spiritual education", and he graduated in 1957.

In 1953, he married Darshan Chhabda (sister of well-known painter Bal Chhabda). The marriage was opposed by both families, partly because Kolatkar was yet to sell any of his paintings.

His early years in Mumbai were poor but eventful, especially his life as an

upcoming artist, in the Rampart Row neighborhood, where the Artists' Aid Fund Centre was located. Around this time, he also translated Tukaram into English. This period of struggle and transition has been captured in his Marathi poem 'The Turnaround':

"Bombay made me a beggar.
Kalyan gave me a lump of jaggery to suck.
In a small village that had a waterfall
but no name
my blanket found a buyer
and I feasted on plain ordinary water.
I arrived in Nasik with
peepul leaves between my teeth.
There I sold my Tukaram
to buy some bread and mince." (translation by Kolatkar)

After many years of struggle, he started work as an art director and graphic designer in several advertising agencies like Lintas. By mid-60s he was established as a graphic artist, and joined Mass Communication and Marketing, an eclectic group of creatives headed by the legendary advertiser Kersy Katrak. It was Katrak, himself a poet, who pushed Kolatkar into bringing out Jejuri.[5] Kolatkar was, in advertising jargon, a 'visualizer'; and soon became one of Mumbai's most successful art directors. He won the prestigious CAG award for advertising six times, and was admitted to the CAG Hall of Fame. By 1966, his marriage with Darshan was in trouble, and Kolatkar developed a drinking problem. This went down after the marriage was dissolved by mutual agreement and he married his second wife, Soonu.

 Marathi Poetry and Influence

His 'Marathi' poems of the 50s and 60s are written "in the Bombay argot of the migrant working classes and the underworld, part Hindi, part Marathi, which the Hindi film industry would make proper use of only decades later". For instance, consider the following, which intersperses Hindi dialect into the Marathi:

"?? ?????? ?????□	"main bhAbhiiko bolA
???? ?????????? ?????????? ?? ? ??? ?□	kya bhAisAbke dyuTipe main A jAu?
???? ??? ?????	hA Rak gayi sAli
????? ????? ????? ?????????□	rahmAn bolA goli chAlAungA
?? ????? ?? ??????? ?????????□	mai bolA ek raNDike wAste?
???? ????? ??????"	chalao goli gaNDu"

To match this in his English translation, he sometimes adopts "a cowboy

variety":

"allow me beautiful
i said to my sister in law
to step in my brother's booties
you had it coming said rehman
a gun in his hand
shoot me punk
kill your brother i said
for a bloody cunt" (Three cups of Tea)

In Marathi, his poetry is the quintessence of the modernist as manifested in the 'little magazine movement' in the 1950s and 60s. His early Marathi poetry was radically experimental and displayed the influences of European avant-garde trends like surrealism, expressionism and Beat generation poetry. These poems are oblique, whimsical and at the same time dark, sinister, and exceedingly funny. Some of these characteristics can be seen in *Jejuri* and *Kala Ghoda Poems* in English, but his early Marathi poems are far more radical, dark and humorous than his English poems. His early Marathi poetry is far more audacious and takes greater liberties with language. However, in his later Marathi poetry, the poetic language is more accessible and less radical compared to earlier works. His later works *Chirimiri*, *Bhijki Vahi* and *Droan* are less introverted and less nightmarish. They show a greater social awareness and his satire becomes more direct. Bilingual poet and anthologist Vilas Sarang assigns great importance to Kolatkar's contribution to Marathi poetry, pointing to *Chirimiri* in particular as "a work that must give inspiration and direction to all future Marathi poets".

He won the Kusumagraj Puraskar given by the Marathwada Sahitya Parishad in 1991 and Bahinabai Puraskar given by Bahinabai Prathistan in 1995. Kolatkar was among a group of post-independence bilingual poets who fused the diction of their mother tongues along with international styles to break new ground in their poetic traditions; others in this group included Gopalakrishna Adiga (Kannada), Raghuvir Sahay (Hindi), Dilip Chitre (also Marathi), Sunil Gangopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhury (Bengali), etc.

 Influences

Marathi devotional poetry and popular theater (tamasha) had early influences on Kolatkar. American beat poetry, especially of William Carlos Williams had later influences on him. Along with friends like Dilip Chitre, he was caught up in the modern shift in Marathi poetry which was pioneered by B. S. Mardhekar.

When asked by an interviewer who his favorite poets and writers were, he set out a large multilingual list. While the answer is part rebuff, the list is indicative of the wide, fragmented sources he may have mined, and is worth quoting in full.

 English Poetry

Kolatkhar was hesitant about bringing out his English verse, but his very first book, *Jejuri*, had a wide impact among fellow poets and litterateurs like Nissim Ezekiel and Salman Rushdie. Brought out from a small press, it was reprinted twice in quick succession, and *Pritish Nandy* was quick to anthologize him in the cult collection, some years, some of his poems were also included in school texts.

The poem sequence deals with a visit to Jejuri, a pilgrimage site for the local Maharashtrian deity Khandoba (a local deity, also an incarnation of Shiva). In a conversation with poet Eunice de Souza, Kolatkhar says he discovered Jejuri in 'a book on temples and legends of Maharashtra... there was a chapter on Jejuri in it. It seemed an interesting place'. Along with his brother and a friend, he visited Jejuri in 1963, and appears to have composed some poems shortly thereafter. A version of the poem *A low temple* was published soon in a little magazine called *Dionysius*, but both the original manuscript and this magazine were lost. Subsequently, the poems were recreated in the 1970s, and were published in a literary quarterly in 1974, and the book came out in 1976.

The poems evoke a series of images to highlight the ambiguities in modern-day life. Although situated in a religious setting, they are not religious; in 1978, an interviewer asked him if he believed in God, and Kolatkhar said: 'I leave the question alone. I don't think I have to take a position about God one way or the other.'

Before *Jejuri*, Kolatkhar had also published other poem sequences, including the *boatride*, which appeared in his little magazine, *damn you: a magazine of the arts* in 1968, and was anthologized twice. A few of his early poems in English also appeared in Dilip Chitre's *Anthology of Marathi poetry 1945-1965* (1967).

Interestingly, though some of these poems claim to be 'English version by poet', "their Marathi originals were never committed to paper." (this is also true of some other bilingual poets like Vilas Sarang.

 Later Work

A reclusive figure all his life, he lived without a telephone, and was hesitant about

bringing out his work. It was only after he was diagnosed with cancer that two volumes were brought out by friends – the English poetry volumes *Kala Ghoda Poems* and *Sarpasatra* (2004).

Sarpa Satra is an 'English version' of a poem with a similar name in *Bhijki Vahi*. It is a typical Kolatkar narrative poem like *Droan*, mixing myth, allegory, and contemporary history. Although Kolatkar was never known as a social commentator, his narrative poems tend to offer a whimsical tilted commentary on social mores. Many poems in *Bhijki Vahi* refer to contemporary history. However, these are not politicians' comments but a poet's, and he avoids the typical Dalit -Leftist-Feminist rhetoric.

While *Jejuri* was about the agonized relationship of a modern sensitive individual with the indigenous culture, the *Kala Ghoda* poems are about the dark underside of Mumbai's underbelly. The bewilderingly heterogeneous megapolis is envisioned in various oblique and whimsical perspectives of an underdog. Like *Jejuri*, *Kala Ghoda* is also 'a place poem' exploring the myth, history, geography, and ethos of the place in a typical Kolatkaresque style. While *Jejuri*, a very popular place for pilgrimage to a pastoral god, could never become Kolatkar's home, *Kala Ghoda* is about exploring the baffling complexities of the great metropolis.

While *Jejuri* can be considered as an example of searching for a belonging, which happens to be the major fixation of the previous generation of Indian poets in English, *Kala Ghoda* poems do not betray any anxieties and agonies of 'belonging'. With *Kala Ghoda Poems*, Indian poetry in English seems to have grown up, shedding adolescent 'identity crises' and goose pimples. The remarkable maturity of poetic vision embodied in the *Kala Ghoda Poems* makes it something of a milestone in Indian poetry in English.

After his death, a new edition of the hard to obtain *Jejuri* was published in the New York Review Books Classics series with an introduction by Amit Chaudhuri (2006). Near his death, he had also requested Arvind Krishna Mehrotra to edit some of his uncollected poems. These poems were published as *The Boatribe and Other Poems* by Pras Prakashan in 2008. His *Collected Poems in English*, edited by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, was published in Britain by Bloodaxe Books in 2010.

He was survived by his wife Soonu Kolatkar.

A Game Of Tigers And Sheep

Who has the tigers and who the sheep

never seems to make any difference.

The result is always the same:

She wins,

I lose.

But sometimes when her tigers

are on the rampage,

and I've lost half my herd of sheep,

help comes from unexpected quarters:

Above.

The Rusty Shield Bearer,

neutral till then,

para-drops a winning flower —

yellow

and irrelevant —

on the checkerboard

drawn on the pavement in charcoal,

cutting off the retreat

of one tiger,

and giving a check to the other;

and quickly follows it up
with another flower —
just as yellow
and just as irrelevant — except
that it comes down even more slowly;
a flower without a search warrant
that brushes past her earlobe,
grazes her cheek,
and disappears down the front
of her low-cut blouse —
where she usually keeps
her stash of hash —
to confuse her even further, with its mildly
narcotic
but very distracting fragrance.

Arun Kolatkar

A Low Temple

A low temple keeps its gods in the dark.
You lend a matchbox to the priest.
One by one the gods come to light.

Amused bronze. Smiling stone. Unsurprised.
For a moment the length of a matchstick
gesture after gesture revives and dies.
Stance after lost stance is found
and lost again.

Who was that, you ask.
The eight-arm goddess, the priest replies.
A sceptic match coughs.
You can count.
But she has eighteen, you protest.
All the same she is still an eight-arm goddess to the priest.

You come out in the sun and light a charminar.
Children play on the back of the twenty-foot tortoise.

Arun Kolatkar

An Old Woman

An old woman grabs
hold of your sleeve
and tags along.

She wants a fifty paise coin.
She says she will take you
to the horseshoe shrine.

You've seen it already.
She hobbles along anyway
and tightens her grip on your shirt.

She won't let you go.
You know how old women are.
They stick to you like a burr.

You turn around and face her
with an air of finality.
You want to end the farce.

When you hear her say,
'What else can an old woman do
on hills as wretched as these?'

You look right at the sky.
Clear through the bullet holes
she has for her eyes.

And as you look on
the cracks that begin around her eyes
spread beyond her skin.

And the hills crack.
And the temples crack.
And the sky falls

with a plateglass clatter
around the shatter proof crone
who stands alone.

And you are reduced
to so much small change
in her hand.

Arun Kolatkar

Chaitanya

A herd of legends
on a hill slope
looked up from its grazing
when chaitanya came in sight.

the hills remained still
when chaitanya
was passing by
a cowbell tinkled
when he disappeared from view
and the herd of legends
returned to its grazing

[From Jejuri]

Arun Kolatkar

Chaitanya 1

Sweet as grapes
are the stone of jejuri
said chaitanya.

He popped a stone
in his mouth
and spat out gods

Arun Kolatkar

Heart Of Ruin

The roof comes down on Maruti's head.
Nobody seems to mind.

Least of all Maruti himself
May be he likes a temple better this way.

A mongrel bitch has found a place
for herself and her puppies

in the heart of the ruin.
May be she likes a temple better this way.

The bitch looks at you guardedly
Past a doorway cluttered with broken tiles.

The pariah puppies tumble over her.
May be they like a temple better this way.

The black eared puppy has gone a little too far.
A tile clicks under its foot.

It's enough to strike terror in the heart
of a dung beetle

and send him running for cover
to the safety of the broken collection box

that never did get a chance to get out
from under the crushing weight of the roof beam.

No more a place of worship this place
is nothing less than the house of god.

Arun Kolatkar

Hills

Hills
demons
sand blasted shoulders
bladed with shale

demons
hills
cactus thrust
up through ribs of rock

hills
demons
kneequartz
limestone loins

demons
hills
cactus fang
in sky meat

hills
demons
vertebrated
with rock cut steps

demons
hills
sun stroked
thighs of sand stone

hills
demons
pelvic granite
fallen archways

demons.

Arun Kolatkar

Makarand

Take my shirt off
and go in there to do puja ?
No thanks.

Not me.
But you go right ahead
if that's what you want to do.

Give me the matchbox
before you go,
will you ?

I will be out in the courtyard
where no one will mind it
if I smoke.

Arun Kolatkar

Pi-Dog

1

This is the time of day I like best,
and this the hour
when I can call this city my own;

when I like nothing better
than to lie down here, at the exact centre
of this traf?c island

(or trisland as I call it for short,
and also to suggest
a triangular island with rounded corners)

that doubles as a parking lot
on working days,
a corral for more than ?fty cars,

when it's deserted early in the morning,
and I'm the only sign
of intelligent life on the planet;

the concrete surface hard, ?at and cool
against my belly,
my lower jaw at rest on crossed forepaws;

just about where the equestrian statue
of what's-his-name
must've stood once, or so I imagine.

2

I look a bit like
a seventeenth-century map of Bombay
with its seven islands

not joined yet,
shown in solid black
on a body the colour of old parchment;

with Old Woman's Island

on my forehead,
Mahim on my croup,

and the others distributed
casually among
brisket, withers, saddle and loin

- with a pirate's
rather than a cartographer's regard
for accuracy.

3
I like to trace my descent
- no proof of course,
just a strong family tradition -

matrilineally,
to the only bitch that proved
tough enough to have survived,

First, the long voyage,
and then the wretched weather here
- a combination

that killed the rest of the pack
of thirty foxhounds,
imported all the way from England

by Sir Bartle Frere
in eighteen hundred and sixty-four,
with the crazy idea

of introducing fox-hunting to Bombay.
Just the sort of thing
he felt the city badly needed.

4
On my father's side
the line goes back to the dog that followed
Yudhishtira

on his last journey,

and stayed with him till the very end;
long after all the others

- Draupadi first, then Sahadeva,
then Nakul, followed by Arjuna and,
last of all, Bhima -

had fallen by the wayside.
Dog in tow, Yudhishtira alone plodded on.
Until he too,

frostbitten and blinded with snow,
dizzy with hunger and gasping for air,
was about to collapse

in the icy wastes of the Himalayas;
when help came
in the shape of a flying chariot

to airlift him to heaven.
Yudhishtira, that noble prince, refused
to get on board unless dogs were allowed.

And my ancestor became the only dog
to have made it to heaven
in recorded history.

5
To find a more moving instance
of man's devotion to dog,
we have to leave the realm of history,

skip a few thousand years
and pick up a work of science fantasy
- Harlan Ellison's A Boy and his Dog,

a cultbook among pi-dogs everywhere -
in which the 'Boy' of the title
sacrifices his love,

and serves up his girlfriend
as dogfood to save the life of his

starving canine master.

6

I answer to the name of Ugh.

No,

not the exclamation of disgust;

but the U pronounced as in Upanishad,
and gh not silent,
but as in ghost, ghouL or gherkin.

It's short for Ughekalikadu,
Siddharamayya's
famous dog that I was named after,

the guru of Kallidevayya's dog
who could recite
the four Vedas backwards.

My own knowledge of the scriptures
begins
and ends, I'm afraid,

with just one mantra, or verse;
the tenth,
from the sixty-second hymn

in the third mandala of the Rig
(and to think
that the Rig alone contains ten thousand

?ve hundred and ?fty-two verses).
It's composed in the Gayatri metre,
and it goes:

Om tat savitur varenyam
bhargo devasya dhimahi
dhiyo yonah prachodayat.

Twenty-four syllables, exactly,
if you count the initial Om.
Please don't ask me what it means, though.

All I know
is that it's addressed to the sun-god
- hence it's called Savitri -

and it seems appropriate enough
to recite it
as I sit here waiting for the sun

to rise.
May the sun-god amplify
the powers of my mind.

7

What I like about this time and place
- as I lie here hugging the ground,
my jaw at rest on crossed forepaws,

my eyes level with the welltempered
but gapped keyboard
of the black-and-white concrete blocks

that form the border of this trisland
and give me my primary horizon -
is that I am left completely undisturbed

to work in peace on my magnum opus:
a triple sonata for a circumpiano
based on three distinct themes -

one suggested by a magpie robin,
another by the wail of an ambulance,
and the third by a rockdrill;

a piebald pianist, caressing and tickling
the concrete keys with his eyes,
undeterred by digital deprivation.

8

As I play,
the city slowly reconstructs itself,
stone by numbered stone.

Every stone
seeks out his brothers
and is joined by his neighbours.

Every single crack
returns to its ?agstone
and all is forgiven.

Trees arrive at themselves,
each one ready
to give an account of its leaves.

The mahogany drops
a casket bursting with winged seeds
by the wayside,

like an inexperienced thief
drops stolen jewels
at the sight of a cop.

St Andrew's church tiptoes back to its place,
shoes in hand,
like a husband after late-night revels.

The university,
you'll be glad to know,
can never get lost

because, although forgetful,
it always carries
its address in its pocket.

9
My nose quivers.
A many-coloured smell
of innocence and lavender,

mildly acidic perspiration
and nail polish,
rosewood and rosin

travels like a lighted fuse
up my nose
and explodes in my brain.

It's not the leggy young girl
taking a short cut
through this island as usual,

violin case in hand,
and late again for her music class
at the Max Mueller Bhavan,

so much as a warning to me
that my idyll
will soon be over,

that the time has come for me
to surrender the city
to its so-called masters.

Arun Kolatkar

Scratch

What is god
and what is stone
the dividing line
if it exists
is very thin
at jejuri
and every other stone
is god or his cousin

there is no crop
other than god
and god is harvested here
around the year
and round the clock
out of the bad earth
and the hard rock

that giant hunk of rock
the size of a bedroom
is khandoba's wife turned to stone
the crack that runs right across
is the scar from his broadsword
he struck her down with
once in a fit of rage

scratch a rock
and a legend springs

Arun Kolatkar

Station Dog

The spirit of the place
lives inside the mangy body
of the station dog

doing penance for the last
three hundred years under
the tree of arrivals and departures

the dog opens his right eye
just long enough to look at and see
whether you're a man or a demigod

or the eight armed railway timetable come
to stroke him on the head
with a healing hand

and to take him to heaven
the dog decides
the day is not yet.

Arun Kolatkar

The Bus

The tarpaulin flaps are buttoned down
on the windows of the state transport bus.
all the way up to jejuri.

a cold wind keeps whipping
and slapping a corner of tarpaulin at your elbow.

you look down to the roaring road.
you search for the signs of daybreak in what little light spills out of bus.

your own divided face in the pair of glasses
on an oldman`s nose
is all the countryside you get to see.

you seem to move continually forward.
toward a destination
just beyond the castemark beyond his eyebrows.

outside, the sun has risen quitely
it aims through an eyelet in the tarpaulin.
and shoots at the oldman`s glasses.

a sawed off sunbeam comes to rest gently against the driver`s right temple.
the bus seems to change direction.

at the end of bumpy ride with your own face on the either side
when you get off the bus.

you dont step inside the old man`s head.

Arun Kolatkar

The Butterfly

There is no story behind it.
It is split like a second.
It hinges around itself.

It has no future.
It is pinned down to no past.
It's a pun on the present.

Its a little yellow butterfly.
It has taken these wretched hills
under its wings.

Just a pinch of yellow,
it opens before it closes
and it closes before it o

where is it?

Arun Kolatkar

The Door

A prophet half brought down.
from the cross
a dangling martyr.

since one hinge broke
the heavy medieval door
flangs on one hinge alone.

one corner drags in dust on the road.
the other knocks
against the high threshold.

like a memory that nly gets sharper.
with the passage of time,
the grain stands out on the wood.

as graphic in detail
as a flayed man of muscles hwo could not find
his way back into the anatomy book.

as is leaning against
any old doorway to sober up
like teh local drunk

helll with the hinge and damn the jab
the door would have walked out
long long ago

if it weren `t for
that pairs of shorts
left to dry upon its shoulders.

Arun Kolatkar

The Doorstep

That's no doorstep.
its a pillar on the side.

Yes
thats what it is.

Arun Kolatkar

The Horseshoe Shrine

That nick in the rock
is really a kick in the side of the hill.
It's where a hoof
struck

like a thunderbolt
when Khandoba
with the bride sidesaddle behind him on the blue
horse

jumped across the valley
and the three
went on from there like one
spark

fleeing from flint.
To a home that waited
on the other side of the hill like a hay
stack.

Arun Kolatkar

The Indicator

A wooden saint
in need of paint

the indicator
has turned inward
ten times over

swallowed the names
of all the railway
stations it knows

removed its hands
from its face
and put them away
in its pockets

if it knows when
the next train's due
it gives no clue

the clockface adds
its numerals

the total is zero.

Arun Kolatkar

The Manohar

The door was open.
Manohar thought
it was one more temple.

He looked inside.
Wondering
which god he was going to find.

He quickly turned away
when a wide eyed calf
looked back at him.

It isn't another temple,
he said,
it's just a cowshed.

Arun Kolatkar

The Pattern

A checkerboard pattern
some old men must have drawn
yesterday

with a piece of chalk
on the back of the twenty foot
tortoise

smudges under the bare feet
and gets fainter all the time as
the children run.

Arun Kolatkar

The Reservoir

There isn't a dropp of water
in the great reservoir the peshwas built.

There is nothing in it.
Except the hundred years of silt.

Arun Kolatkar

The Station Master

The booking clerk believes in the doctrine
of the next train
when conversations turns to time
he talks his tongue
hands it to you across the counter
and directs you to the superior

the two headed station master
belongs to a sect
that rejects every time table
not published in the year the track was laid.
an apocryphal
but interprets the first time table
with the freedom that alloows him to read
every subsequent timetable between
the lines of text.

Arun Kolatkar

The Tea Stall

The young novice at the tea stall
has taken a vow of silence

when you ask him a question
he exorcise

by sprinkling dishwater in your face
and continues with abulations in the sink

and certain ceremonies connected
with the washing of cups and saucers.

Arun Kolatkar

Traffic Lights

Fifty phantom motorcyclists
all in black
crash-helmeted outriders
faceless behind tinted visors
come thundering from one end of the road
and go roaring down the other
shattering the petrified silence of the night
like a delirium of rock-drills
preceded by a wailing cherry-top
and followed by a faceless president
in a deathly white Mercedes
coming from the airport and going downtown
raising a storm of protest in its wake
from angry scraps of paper and dry leaves
but unobserved by traffic lights
that seem to have eyes only for each other
and who like ill-starred lovers
fated never to meet
but condemned to live forever and ever
in each other's sight

continue to send signals to each other
throughout the night
and burn with the cold passion of rubies
separated by an empty street.

Arun Kolatkar

Yeshwant Rao

Are you looking for a god?
I know a good one.
His name is Yeshwant Rao
and he's one of the best.
look him up
when you are in Jejuri next.
Of course he's only a second class god
and his place is just outside the main temple.
Outside even of the outer wall.
As if he belonged
among the tradesmen and the lepers.
I've known gods
prettier faced
or straighter laced.
Gods who soak you for your gold.
Gods who soak you for your soul.
Gods who make you walk
on a bed of burning coal.
Gods who put a child inside your wife.
Or a knife inside your enemy.
Gods who tell you how to live your life,
double your money
or triple your land holdings.
Gods who can barely suppress a smile
as you crawl a mile for them.
Gods who will see you drown
if you won't buy them a new crown.
And although I'm sure they're all to be praised,
they're either too symmetrical
or too theatrical for my taste.
Yeshwant Rao,
mass of basalt,
bright as any post box,
the shape of protoplasm
or king size lava pie
thrown against the wall,
without an arm, a leg
or even a single head.
Yeshwant Rao.

He's the god you've got to meet.
If you're short of a limb,
Yeshwant Rao will lend you a hand
and get you back on your feet.
Yeshwant Rao
Does nothing spectacular.
He doesn't promise you the earth
Or book your seat on the next rocket to heaven.
But if any bones are broken,
you know he'll mend them.
He'll make you whole in your body
and hope your spirit will look after itself.
He is merely a kind of a bone-setter.
The only thing is,
as he himself has no heads, hands and feet,
he happens to understand you a little better.

Arun Kolatkar