



Ashok
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Other
Worlds

Down in the Dirt
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BUTT-ENDS

Like the madman in matted hair
With a fixed stare
I assiduously collect the butt-ends of my days
From ash-trays:

I meticulously arrange them on my writing table
In descending order, longer to shorter
And then I carefully calculate
How much time I will have left
After I have smoked the last cigarette.

It's a wonderfully repetitive process
Now that I have learnt to hoard.

But I must keep a matchbox handy
To light the butt-ends of my days.



BUTTERFLY NET

In the forest with my net and magnifying glass,
Sandwiches and coffee and all the equipment I need
I catch and examine butterflies.
A stallion rides into my butterfly net
And once enmeshed,
Starts to neigh and stamp his feet
Crushing the grass flowers beneath.

I was out to catch a butterfly
But caught a horse instead.







CROWS

At morning light, crows gather
Over the thrashing body of their fallen sibling.
As you walk by they are bold in their anger
They fly through your hair and draw blood from your scalp
And all of them together make such an awful din
It recalls for you your original sin.

And all the while, the sibling
Thrashes on the sidewalk.
The red inside its beak shows in desperation
As the crows gather in the morning light.

Ego Trip

I have nothing to say
That people want to hear,
I have no flowers in my hair,
No attitudes even
But madmen mumble to themselves.

And by mumbling into a tape
I go into an ego-trip,
I pretend to be a poet.
Just like I regret living alone,
To be somebody or the other.
That's good acting
Getting into the skin of the character you want to be,
We are all actors, aren't we?

On some, fortune smiles
And they make piles and piles of money
In computer chips or grains of rice,
And some are alcoholics
Who end up in gutters beside the road.
But the most unfortunate are those in between
Who lie back in bedrooms
With quilts covering their bodies
Dreamless,
Sleepless,
Waiting,
Waiting forever.





FLAMES IN PARADISE



I am petrified

What would people do
If they ever had the time
To listen to my words.
Will they blame me
For the flames that rise in paradise,
In lives turned upside down,
Postponed celebrations, cancelled parties,
Apprehensive car rides in the midnight rain?

I comprehend somewhere at the back of my mind
That life is a straight line
And forward movement is socially acclaimed.
But how can a drunk move in a straight line,
And only forward?
His feet go this way and that,
And his mind has been blown asunder
And then glued together in ether.

How can a drunk appreciate the established disciplines
Of the forward life.

Light



Please keep in mind
I'm talking of Delhi and not Moscow.
If I were a painter
I would have caught
This beautiful slanting morning light
When everything is soothing:
Nothing is bright.

But poets have no seasons you see -
We just write poetry.

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