12. POETRY'S THEME

Twilight is burning out and turning chill,
Night comes fresh-bathed from where the moon's spring
flows;
And now—these eager eyes shall have their will,
These avid fingers feel the touch of those!
Is that her fringed veil, is it her face, her dress,
Behind the hanging gauze, that makes it glow—
And in the vague mist of that rippling tress
Does the bright earring twinkle still, or no?
Subtly once more her loveliness will speak,
Those pencilled lids, those languorous eyes, again;

POETRY'S THEME

1 Evening, numb and smouldering, is being extinguished,
   Soon night will emerge, bathed, from the fountain of the moon,
And the eyes' desire will be fulfilled,
   And these thirsting hands will touch those hands!
5 Is it the border of her veil, or cheek, or is it her mantle?
   Something there is by which the curtain is being tinged with colour.
   There is no knowing whether in the hazy thick shade of that tress
   That earring is still twinkling or not.
   Today again there will be the same style of captivating beauty,
10 Those same as-if-sleeping eyes, that line of lampblack,

MAUZÙ‘-E-SUKHAN

1 Gul hû’i-jâti hai afsurda sulagti hû’i shâm,
Dhulke niklegî abhi chashma-e-mahtâb se rât,
Aur—mushtâq nigahôn ki sunî-jâ’egi,
Aur—un hâthön se mas honge ye tarse hû’e hât!
5 Unkâ ânchal hai, kâ ruqhsâr, kâ pairâhan hai?
   Kuchh to hai jis-se hû’i-jâti hai chilman raâgîn.
Jâne us zulf ki mauhûm ghanî chhâ’oî men
   Timâmatâ hai vo ðezea abhi tak kâ nahi.
   Aj phir ðusn-e-dilârâ ki vuhi dhaj hogi,
10 Vûhi khvâbida-si ânkheî, vuhi kájal kî lâkîr,
Dusted with that faint powder, her pink cheek,
On her pale hand the henna's delicate stain.
Here is the chosen world of rhyme and dream
My muse inhabits, here her darling theme!

—Under the black and blood-red murk of ages
How has it fared with Eve's sons all these years?
How shall we fare, where daily combat rages
Of death with life? how fared our forefathers?

Why must those gay streets' swarming progeny
So draw breath that to die is all they crave?
In those rich fields bursting with bounty, why
Must no ripe harvest except hunger wave?

On the colour of the cheek that faint cloud of powder,
On the sandalwood-coloured hand the misty tracery of henna.
This only is the world of my thoughts, my verses,
This only is the soul of my meaning, this only is the darling of my intent.

15 Down to today, under the shadow of red and black centuries,
What has befallen the offspring of Adam and Eve?
In the daily battle-array of death and life,
What will befall us, what has befallen our ancestors?
The multitudinous creatures of these glittering cities,

20 Why do they keep living only in desire of death?
These lovely fields, whose bloom is bursting out,
Why does only hunger keep growing in them?

Rang-e-rukhsār pē halkā-sā vo gha'ze kā ghubār,
Šāndalī hāth pē dhundīl-sī hīnā kī tāhir.
Apne akār kī, ash'ār kī dunyā hāi yēhī,
Jān-e-mazāmūn hāi yēhī, shāhīd-e-ma'nā hāi yēhī.

15 Āj tak surkh o siya šadyoṅ ke sā'e ke tale,
Adam o Ḥavvā kī aulād pē kya guzrī hāi?
Maut aur zār kī rozāna salārā tī men,
Ham pē kya guzri, ajdād pē kya guzri hāi?
In damakte hū'ē shahron kī farāwān makhluq

20 Kyūn faqāt marne kī ḥasrat meṅ jiyā-kartī hāi?
Ye hāsyn hēt, phatā-patā hāi joban jinkā,
Kis-līye un-meṅ faqāt bhūk usā-kartī hāi?
Walls dark with secrets frown on every side,
That countless lamps of youth have sunk behind;
Everywhere scaffolds on which dreams have died
That lit unnumbered candles in man's mind.

—These too are subjects; more there are;—but oh,
Those limbs that curve so fatally ravishingly!
Oh that sweet wretch, those lips parting so slow—
Tell me where else such witchery could be!
No other theme will ever fit my rhyme;
Nowhere but here is poetry's native clime.

These harsh walls on every side, full of mysteries,
In which the lamps of the youth of thousands have burned away,
25 These execution-grounds, at every step, of those dreams
By whose radiance the minds of thousands are lamps:
These also are themes, others also like them there may be.
But the slowly opening lips of that saucy one!
Ah, the cursed alluring lines of that body!
30 You yourself say, will there be such sorceries anywhere else?
My theme of poetry is nothing else except these,
The native land of the poet's nature is nothing else except these.

Ye harēk sīm pur-āsrār kārī diwārēn,
Jal-bujhe jīn-men hazāroñ kī jawānī ke charāgh,
25 Ye harēk gām pē un khwābōn kī maqīl-gāhēn,
Jinke partau se charāghān hain hazāroñ ke dimāgh:
Ye bī hain, aise ka'i aur bhi mazmūn honge;
Lekin us shokh ke âhistā-se khulte-hū'ē honē,
Hā'ē us jism ke kambalēt dil-āwez khūṭīt—
30 Āp-ī hāiye, kahinī aise bī afsūn hongē?
Ampā māzū'-e-sukhan inke siwā aur nahih,
_Tab'-e-shā'īr kā wātān inke siwā aur nahih.