

Amlanjyoti Goswami's Poems

Signposts, Tezpur

Mahabhairab temple is round the corner.
If you go further, you will chance upon

The mental hospital, now called the mental health institute
And if you turn right, you will be atop the hillock

Looking at the vast mighty river, the broad shouldered one.
With a boat tied to hope in the sand, you can make the waters move.

How it was then, thirty-five years ago.
This quaint little town now only in your head.

Once upon a time, you won battles with fire.
Now even the spectators have disappeared.

But he still remembers the route to his friend's house.
How way leads to way and who knows who lives there now

And if we will ever come back
To this little town of small alleys and stone temples

With roadside bakeries and fresh cookies
Almost bittersweet like those memories.

Perfect as a spot of sunlight, the perch where the river appears.
Only a spot in your mind now...

And she too is unaware, doesn't know, doesn't care
Where you are, when you will return, as evening draws near

And each breath is fresh when someone asks: is it curable?
The expert shakes his head and says nothing more.

They come and go and come again
And no, it's not curable but sometimes they do show signs of 'progress'.

We go round the Shiva temple expecting Mahabhairab to shower his blessings
Just take three deep breaths and all will be well

Inside the tremors of mind, that vast universe no one knows,
No one has been all the way and back

The one with no hope and no sorrow
While in this world, things go on as before.

We will reach evening by Guwahati

We will reach evening by Guwahati.
We need no google map to get there.

Last time we stopped by fireflies, in the solemn darkness
That ate us like popcorn, old leavenings, betelnut saplings

A red chambered heart still beating
While ancient trucks blinded the highway with dust.

Keep it light, keep it low
Keep the mind's windows open this time – to let the air in

And the air conditioner must heal too.
The tires need rest, in the roadside tea shack where we exchanged

Our vows for eternity, those sunlit eyes glancing,
They will ask if we need a little more –

Perhaps tea, perhaps an omelette?
Who knows where we are, where we are going this time

As sepia stained photographs stare back innocent
And lost faces remember a spurned destiny

Returning to haunt our nights.
So be it, life is not for beginning again

For breeding silken despair,
For forgetting forever.

Turn the ignition on, life,
Bring on the engines whirring flight.

Ask no questions, let's speed on
Fly with the times, the breeze our only company, as strangers wave us by.

On the way we will pass by coconut trees and betelnut green
In a whirr, and our photographs will be forgotten by tomorrow.

We will see monkeys from remote branches, but they will be busy
With Christmas, preparing for lunch – tea, cakes and music.

Yesterday's friends will grow silver haired next time, while today's cup
Is still fresh for drinking, still brimming with life & hope

At the year's ending.
Yet the quiet empty feeling returns like a stomach pit

Saying something, I can't hear, those submerged voices

Keep it light, else you will drown, you can't bear the weight

Of your sorrow, reality, the day's uncertain worry
The remaining company.

A mantra swinging from tree branches
Marking tailbone and fur, no temperature too distant

Too measured for a thermometer's science and balance.
Let us reach evening by Guwahati.

From there we will ask the river: wherenext?
Which mountain and ocean will guide us?

And we will promise the new year - hope – and we will fill the pitcher
And we will drink sunsets of magic, and we will park despair on the way

And leave sadness stranded by the light post, solar panelled for tomorrow.
And today will still be beautiful.

Amlanjyoti Goswami has written two widely reviewed books of poetry, *Vital Signs* and *River Wedding*, published by Poetrywala. His poems have been published in journals and anthologies around the world including *Poetry*, *The Poetry Review*, *Rattle*, *Penguin Vintage* and *Sahitya Akademi*. A Best of the Net and Pushcart nominee, his poems have also appeared on street walls in Christchurch, exhibitions in Johannesburg, an e-gallery in Brighton and buses in Philadelphia. He has reviewed poetry for *Modern Poetry in Translation* and has read in various places, including New York, Delhi, Chandigarh, Bangalore and Boston. He grew up in Guwahati and lives in Delhi.