

# Harekrishna Deka's Poems

## Magritte and Myself: Three Poems

### 1) The hours of Magritte

Magritte,  
 With which dagger  
 Did you try to stab time ?  
 While trying to scratch time  
 Your black locomotive dagger  
 Remains motionless in its own propulsion  
 At the fireplace of the drawing-room !  
 Does time pay any heed to this stab of modernity ?  
 Modernity itself is ageing.  
 It only rests upon the metaphor  
 That comes drifting from your unconsciousness.  
 Though time opens up the pages of history  
 For the people  
 With the people's own handwriting  
 They turn into gory and lacerated texts of these very people.  
 People don't learn anything from them.  
 Time doesn't turn behind to have a look,  
 Rather it's even unable to cast a glance.  
 For the final moment's devastation  
 There  
 Only a pathetic mockery is retained.  
 Floating upon the fireplace  
 Would your locomotive dagger  
 Give a pin-prick on those pages of history  
 Magritte,  
 Will it itself become a puppet of pity  
 On the texts of history ?  
 What scar would a feeble scratch of your dagger  
 Leave on the body of time ?  
 Time shall move away at full throttle  
 Without being aware of  
 Towards which dark cavern.†

### 2) Magritte's Apple

A tempting apple  
 Made the people write off their innocence.  
 Rolling over myths  
 It turned into an apple of discord  
 No one had plucked the apple,  
 It had dropped on its own,  
 But the lover from Troy had plucked Helen and taken her away;  
 The city of Troy was reduced to wreckage.  
 Magritte, in your painting you've made Adam's inheritor  
 Behold the world  
 Through a green apple.  
 You didn't let see (or you didn't wish to see yourself)  
 The tree biding its time for its moment of death  
 After being oppressed by the people who stripped the environment.  
 Civilization has been tumbling down and down.  
 And now  
 As the elegant gentleman in your painting

With eyes almost covered  
Doesn't see most of the scenes in front of him  
The civilized people don't see —  
(In reality they are unbothered to have a look)  
The rape of the environment.  
The offenders are his own kith and kin.  
And perhaps he himself too is one of them.<sup>2</sup>

### 3) Magritte's Pipe

Magritte, you've painted a pipe and keep saying  
It isn't a pipe.  
Yes, it's not a smoking pipe.  
No doubt, this is a painting of a pipe.  
In the painting it's nothing else but a pipe.  
With this pipe you can't have a puff of tobacco,  
No problem at all.  
Still it's the representation of a pipe,  
For among the pipes available in the market  
It has a resemblance with all.  
And moreover, Magritte!  
From the day you completed the painting  
This pipe has become exclusively yours.  
With your signature below the painting  
You've accepted its copyright.  
Your claim that it isn't a pipe  
Is only helping to point at it more and more  
That it's a pipe.  
Once you had even painted an apple  
And said that it wasn't an apple.  
Of course, it isn't.  
It's a painting done by you.  
Nevertheless such an apple keeps your face covered forever  
In such a way  
That with your covered eyes you're able to see  
Only a little of the scenes in front.  
Tell me, does anyone see a scene fully  
Besides the partially blind?<sup>3</sup>

1. The subject-matter of the first poem is the iconic surrealist painting, 'Time Transfixed' (1938) by Rene Magritte. Magritte sought to name the painting as 'The ongoing time stabbed by a dagger'. The title 'Time Transfixed' was proposed by his patron, Edward James. [↩](#) [□](#)
2. The title of Magritte's painting referred to in the second poem is 'The Son of Man'. [↩](#) [□](#)
3. The title of Magritte's painting mentioned in the third poem is 'This is not a Pipe'. [↩](#) [□](#)

*Translated by Krishna Dulal Barua*

**Harekrishna Deka** is a Sahitya Akademi award winner poet, short story writer and literary critic of India who writes in Assamese.

**Krishna Dulal Barua** is a prominent translator and writer based in Nagaon, Assam. He received the Katha Award for translation in 2005.