

Maheswar Neog's Poem

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The Low-born Lass

It was only a moment
And in that thy beauty and splendour,
Filled with something divine,
Drowned my mind.

Thou art like a painted doll
A nymph or princess or maid of a saint
With thy beauty drawn in rocks of Ajanta.

And yet there lies
The curse of some earlier birth
Abject poverty
Meanness of caste
Looked down upon by society
In this unknown dark corner of the world.

Your tender grace
With untied locks like tails of snakes
Shapely nose like the peak
Of a distant hill
Your person reddened like unmolten gold
In colour, dark and green like a blue lotus.

The folds of your neck hanging down
With the weight of your youth
Your slim waist like the neck of a lute
Trembling with the movement of your steps
With hips like waves made by a painting brush.

And thy heels rendered red
By touches of pebbles and plants.

The lure of thine
Burnt with love and grace
And the unclean cloth you wear
Drenched in want
Heightens your charm

Like filth and water augmenting
The lure of lotus.

This moment was of bygone days—
A moment dimly seen from a moving car
Whose memory flares up in my mind
Like moonlight blurred by fog.

You are the woebegone lotus-dream
Emerging from the ooze of reality
In a winter dawn.
A damsel like the goddess of plenty
Devoid, however, of her bounty.

Translated by **Dr. Pona Mahanta**

Maheswar Neog (7 September 1915 – 13 September 1995) was a distinguished academic, Indologist, and poet of India.

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