SILENT FLOWS DANUBE

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Silent Flows Danube

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Roma are the people who left India a millennium back either due to forcible enslavement or in search of better life. Today they are scattered all over the world. However, a good majority of them resides in Southeastern Europe, primarily in Balkan states. The current volume is a reflective account of the Roma people by the poet who interacted with many of them during his visit to cities like Belgrade, Zemun, Lescovac, Nis' etc. of Serbia in October-November 2007.

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Silent flows Danube Under the blanket of thick mist, Over the ruby landscapes of Belgrade.

The rascals of peace Howl over its serene waters And escape friskily Into the broiling heart Of Kosovo.

Flummoxed
The green-belted rangers
Of the United Nations
And the hued patrons
Of liberty and equality,
Take a second look

At the migrating legs From the quagmire of uncertainty, And settle peacefully In their secure barricades.

The hearts that swing Over the quaking legs Tumultuously Seek asylum In the holes Of deceptive cobras.

Silent flows the life,
Another flux
Of prosperity and modernity,
Along the borders of wails
And the languishing hearts,
Hoodwinking over the tents of justice
Under the skies
Pervaded by hawks.

The Webbed Grottoes

Around the graveled path
Running through the criss-cross streets
And lanky alleys
Networking the cities Zamun and Lascovac
History mushrooms new stories
Into the veins of Gypsy air.

A gypsy boy shakes hand From the horde of Roma.

Silent they stand Glaring at the stream of history That runs millennium back As the group of Indian delegation Looms around.

Another history is shaped Near the confluence of Danube and Sava As the Romas hug their brethren From the land of their ancestors.

And then the long course of events.
The webbed grottoes of memory
Take short snippets
Of the forlorn glimpses,
Persian, Ottoman, Arabian, Balkan ...
And entwine a rosary of blood-bubbles.

The Bamti, Beldari, Dom, Garodi, Gasai, Gulgulia, Kandzari, Kolhati, Ladi, Malari, Mianuali, Lahari Nati, Odki, Phendari, Sasi, Sikalgari, Banjara, And Lamani, Sharai, Luri, All beads of the same kaleidoscope Shimmer in Europe But to be clouded.

At dusk
When the darkness shakes hand
With the Sun,
And the shadows
Of the shanties and trees
Start flickering before evaporation,

A diffident flash of kerosene lamp And the overloaded Single phase of electricity Culvert the new dreams Into the drain of indignity.

The hesitant steps
Row against the porch
Of the city gaff
To greet the men
From the country of their origin.
A carnival to reproduce
The pinnacles of old glories
They still cherish
Since they got strayed from India.

The early puffs of smoke In the morning Spring a new life Into the slouched bellies And pump in raw calories In the feeble frames.

Should I stand for a while
To sense the perfume of the city
That the air jabbles against my nose,
And the velour of its sons
Which hasn't gone in vain,
And craft the art of gypsy girls
Into the words curvaceous
To make an account?

The Mask of Happiness

The mask of happiness I could notice
That you have worn
Over the crumpled face
Charred by the burns of
Atrociously white eyes.

Your name sounds nice, It gives you a nice camouflage To mingle in the dreaded lands, And pass a countenance Fully equipped With happiness and prosperity.

But what about the thick nose Dark eyes, black curled hair, Oblong face,
And the pigments
That turn you dark
And unfold the gates of past
Into a realm of gold
That just languish
And rot
Inside your
Sinking heart.

I could also see
The sad volcano
Rumbling over in your heart
And seeking a crevasse
To explode and level
The landscapes of inequality.

Is there a place
For my concern,
And feelings of brotherhood
In this land
Where I have also seen
The blue eyes
Hawking at me
As if another Gyppo has entered in?

Then there is a race Nonchalant towards the movement Of life and people.

The speed That is life and time,

Gathers all the moss
And what is left behind
Is the odd creature
Having nothing to do
Except raining wrath
At the peppered will of racism.

I could also notice
That you have turned immune
To the wavered scapes of life
And have evolved a philosophy
Of your own,
A philosophy of peace and transcendence
That will engulf all the oddities.

A Wish Runs Through

A wish runs through The soft lines Of your bulging bust, And a lightening In the hollow of belly.

You, a suave mademoiselle Hawk the Solomon wit And pervade over the daredevils Of the thirsty hearts.

Your cantaloupe colored muslin And the caramel tips hold the bombshells of passion.

You pick up the jelly sighs
At the butts
Of your corrugated lines
Nicely drawn
Over the wavering landscapes
Of your mushy frame.

The kestrels of passion
Hoist another flag
Over the hinterlands
Of the creased frenzy
That you carry
Behind the enthralling hipline.

The Ottoman Wish

And there sleeps An Ottoman wish In the Kalemegdan Fortress On the low hill of Belgrade.

Sava stands silent
Watching the flow
Unbridled, of the marching feet;
And as a witness
To the solemn retreat
Of the Turkish boots.

The Serbs, Croatians and Slovenes Assimilate the splits, A rendezvous at the banks of confluence

Till the furtherance Of the new confines.

The air of liberty is queer.
It acquires strange wings
As the heads go high
And souls sour up,
Beckoning at the decay of wishes
As the morsels of disgust
Develop new contours.

An island of hope.
Under the thick mist
Hangs around,
And silent flow the wishes
Of innumerable hearts
In search of a new land,
The city Neo-Beograd.

Kalemegdan Fortress is symbolic of Turkish rule over Serbia till 1911

Is There An End?

The wind
That rustles through the pages
And the dark caverns
Of Roma history
Sings an elegy.

Whose bones are these Scattered around the buds of life?

The gypsy air whirls around To whip the smoke Curling out from the burning faggots.

Is there an end
To the fire of daggers
And to the ambers behind the smoldering eyes?

Suns of Eternity

Man dies And rots into the fermenting soils Under the stones and stubs.

A flame of life flickers Over the bones Spread in taciturnity Cracking the frigid surface of the land.

A wind-wave swerves
Over the graveyard of Roma and Jews
At Kazara and Siask*
Where the lambs were once butchered
And the frigid hearts
Longed for the Suns of eternity.

*Death Camps at Croatia where Jews, Serbs and Romas were butchered during the World War II

The Lost Child

From the lands aromatic The air of uncertainty Stormed you into the torrid zones Of adversity and aridity.

Everyday you rise
With a new Sun
And extinguish the fire of times
That steals into the prime
Of the Roma son.
You light the candle of love,
Burn the fire of peace,
Brighten the Suns of harmony
And join your past of the East
With the present of the West
And awaken the world
With a new slogan.

The Bed Vacant

The bosom of the mother heaves As the bed vacant Heaves upon the silence Of the hacked son.

The air shrills the house And storms into the vacuum Of the perforated hearts.

A spirit awakes
And fire the curtains of darkness,
Empty ambers on the red palms
And inundate all
In the sea-storm of insurrection.

The Gypsy Air

In the periphery of the city Beograd You saunter to have a fuller view Of the scorching Sun And the gypsy air runs into your nostrils Bringing the dampness Of the millennium at your feet.

You sense a tragedy Still mauled by the ugly wishes Of the Nazi hearts.

A pigeon flies pass your dumbness And then a raid of hawks, You close your eyes To see a new world.

The Footprints

A Roma child sleeps
In the lap of its mother.
The slumber slain
Flutters on the eyelids
As daggers from the dark
Dart through the bosom of his mother.

The bloodlets
Smudge the immaculate face
And turn into fire.

Sun is the dream And Sun-beams the stairs. Do you see the footprints Of the tiny feet Climbing upward?

A River Flows Back

In the country hall of Lescovac Echo the pangs of past, The young Roma lads Sing their way Into the hearts of all.

The soft necks
And the lissome ups
Swagger over the pulsating bellies
As the girls flirt
Over the hidden landscapes.

A deep voice surfaces
From the unknown corner
And rips apart
The vale of silence

I have worn .
A lane of tragedies
Takes shape
And you become numb
Over the macabre acts
Committed by times,
And the ill fate
Flung on to the innocuous people.

A river flows back From the marooned lands Into the deeps of hills Where the souls of butchered lambs Still reside.

For a Roma Girl

Hi! Love to your smile.
Your round face
Swirls magically
Over the sagacious stem,
Enthralling with the soft jerks
Of belly dance.
Your smile pounds me
And I am lost.

You remind me
Of the Kalbelia dance
That Banjara girls perform
And break each part of the body
To synchronize a new rhythm
Into the sighing hearts.

With the Ghagra That nicely poises over The slanting fleshscapes Of your gorgeous frame.

Your belly Makes it swivel Like the hind of a golden buck And the hearts go unreigned.

Are you aware That I am one among few Who admire you?

And the rest of the eyes
Are blue,
They see flesh only,
And beyond that
A realm
Where bucks and gazelles
Are chased to death.

^{*}Kalbelia is a traditional dance of the Banjara girls in which they mould their body quite smoothly, a difficult task to perform.

^{*}Ghagra is a long, loose and plated skirt kind of garment worn by women in Rajasthan.

On the Highway-Beograd

In the vast spades and The low hills of Belgrade On the granite line Jets past the Ford Jumbo At the rocking pace of 150 KM.

The serpentine landscapes
Dart against you
As you rocket your way
Into the arms of ruby hillscapes
And the lush green veil
That overwhelms you
At the first sight.

The semi-golden hills Bedecked by pale rain trees

Make you a land of gold Heaven on earth.

The plying vehicles,
Buses and cars
Have adopted the ways of man
Having no business with anyone
Except moving from one place
To the point of destination
Still unknown.

The fields are empty,
The roads man less
And the sea of wheels expands
As the distant horizon
Remains at the other edge
As it was before.

The Shattered Roma Abode*

You stand shattered And the people Have forgotten you As if, nothing has happened.

You have become a grave Of buried Roma traditions, And the words That you gobbled Into the belly of frenzied air.

The blocks
Which are still stuck up
Have a tale to tell;
And the flavescent leaves
Flicker against the feet

That pass besides you.
The seven member Indian delegation
Has nothing to see
But your skeleton
And read the lines of fate
History has pasted
On your puckered face.

A fluff of air Speeds past you And you raise your eyebrows Against the misdemeanor of time.

You whisper queer words Into the ears Of the old oak tree Your long confrere.

The Serb troops
Have nothing to render
Except the shells
And the rain of bullets.
Defiant you stand
As the citadel of
Roma hope and rebellion.

^{*}A bombed Roma House in Zemun

To Our Roma Host Serjo

Your dark eyes
Bear a splattered tear,
You look burdened
With some queer frenzy.

A history peeps through The heavy lids That your eyes lift, And you lift the goblet Of red wine.

I admire the way And the guts You hold against The ferocious wind.

Smiling you serve
The wine and the kine
That I dare not take,
And pull the bone off flesh
Like a potato from the sauce.

Your measured steps
And the cadenced flow of arms
At the trumpet
Tells how quickly you have learnt
The art of survival.

You lift the coat,
Tie up the loosened knot,
Pick up the old countenance,
And bade farewell
So humbly
That reminds me of my Indian mates.

The Barman

Your trumpet brings to mind The pinions of melody And the flights of fairies In the spring fields And the expanding dales Of the Himalayas.

Lost I lift
The goblet of wine,
And pick up the strands
Of the fluffed up air,
To reach the fairy again
Who once broke my heart
And bestowed on me
The sweetened melancholy.

Aaye Romale Aaye Chhavale

I am a Roma,
I am a child of Roma.
The song runs
In the veins of every child
As you wade across
The streets of Zemun and Lescovac.

Even silent whispers
Whimper across your way
The song of the people
Reminiscent of the
Holy war they are engaged
For a millennium.

It is no more a song now Rather a hymn for Roma.

At Slavija Square

Step by step You ascend the culverting Serfs of Belgrade. The scintillating confluence Of Danube and Sava Pierce the thick mist-clouds And paint your face white.

In the streets of the city bright Legless machines Ply like hovering clouds.

Under the varied range Of the spectacular blazers Overcoats and leather jackets, And the scintillating gowns

Black slacks fail to hide The incandescence of The bright shining reeds Full of fats.

At the wide Slavija Square A couple coagulates To the endless mirth, And I behold the flesh Making hay On the palm of morality.

I just fluff
The fire simmering
In a puff
Holding the pane tightly
At a kiosk.

The weather of the city
Is unstable
And so the ladies.
The deceptive wind
Turns the bright day
Into a day of restless rain,
And plug the lanes of life instantly.

Men are more gentlemen, Draped in aristocratic attire, And bathed in perfume They gently walk To the tune of ladies And of course the times That whisker away Friskily.

In the chilling cold You aspire hot patrissage, Dream of the pretty faces, Juicy legs, jelly-lips And find the laundry girl Knocking against your door Collecting the spoilt garments.

Beograd

Beograd,
The heart of the Balkans;
The mirror of the Sun;
And the confluence
Of the Sava and Danube.

It's a witness
To the confluence
And the mergence of the polar
And the political egotism too.
The theocratic surges
Of Orthodox Christianity,
Islam, Roman Catholicism, Protestants
And the communism and capitalism.

Have you learnt the art Of transforming diversity Into hymns of humanity?

For a Serbian Girl

You sit smiling Inveigling the roaming eyes.

Your icicle shaped fingers Arrange the ceramics, Paintings and candles Immaculately.

You present the items Synchronically, A sheer touch of business That turns at my end A business of touch.

My old friend is also a gone case As he proposes you, Though, in a way sardonically

Shying you escape the misdemeanor And move on to the next client.

I have to go for something As I see the porcelain Through your face.

Your word
Is the final dictum,
And works well on my pocket.
I pour more dollars
And disturb my budget
To become a mendicant.

Your adieu works well Over the shillaber, Smilingly you wish best of journey To all of us.

Arrayed well on the cabinet And chiffons, My wife appreciates the purchase And I smile the things away

The Prettiest Hostess at Nis'

You were the prettiest hostess At Nis' As I once again staggered Over the flesh-scapes.

Your dark eyes
And the mango cheeks
That sparkle over the lucent lips
Dazzled me,
As the fall
Of your jaundiced hair
Declared the sunset.

Being a doctor You looked after me well

And offered me anti-biotic For rigorous cough. I kept your pills in my pocket To have a jug of Red Wine.

You tolerate my audacity And place the big jar In front of me.

Your bright hands
Hug the memento of my heart
And you bade farewell to me,
Of course to my words too
With damp eyes
And the silent words,
'If God wished, we will meet again'.

You left the matters
To be settled by fortunes.

The Sun of Hope

From the top of the mountain hill Where the Sun keeps its warm head Every morning, Runs down the Sun of a new morn And the sun of my hope Rises too.

I wake up with a blind eye
To behold the stream
Of your incandescent locks,
And chase the dream
Of stealing fire
From your gut.

My shadow bluffs me As I near you

And melts into the pool It weaves around my feet.

Again I rise
From my shadow
And climb up the hot terrain
To touch your face
And hold your locks
Until you extend
Your bright arms
To embrace me.
And bless the whole brethren
I stand for.

My people trudge
The old path of peace and harmony
And form a new sequence
To touch your feet
And get the darkness of times
Obliterated.

Another Sun Rises

The bright Sun burns Over the heads of Drooping necks, Ever busy In search of pot-holes.

The sullen eyes That have lost the glare Sink into despondency.

Another sun rises At the banks of Danube And omits the dark waves Lashing at the just hopes.

The Cathedral of Saint Sava

Near the broad square
Of the city
Is raised a huge heritage temple
Of Serbo-Byzentine type,
The church of Serbian orthodox faith
In the memory of Saint Sava
On the Vraèar plateau
Whose ashes hue the air
Into steel color,
Eclipsed at the top
By the Turkish ego.

The huge arched roof Is a symposium of faith Under which echo The parting wishes Of the disdained.

In the white marble chapel Of the cathedral Serbs pull the bells, Croatians light the candles, And a Gypsy girl Holds her baby's hand tight Begging for alms.

Poverty knows no religion, Once it spreads It overwhelms all the ups Of the morals, And in the streets of morality Strip naked The brothels of hunger.

Jesus and Mary
Bless well
Under the huge dome of the church
Telling the people
To be humans.

The Gentle Smile

I am amused
At the gentle smile
You always hold
On your rodomont face.

You force our way
Into the sullen hearts
Of the humble homes
Erected on the blocks
Of hope and despair.

On the rectangular table Your smiles beckon to the warmth You serve as a host.

And then the roasted rooster,

Muscular mutton, Fried sago, boiled potatoes And the broccoli Drenched in vinegar.

The cask of the red wine Elates the heaves to heaven. The fair fingers of your lady Spice the dinner well.

You still stand
Smiling and laughing
Over the agonies of times,
And your ladies
Perching the breaths at the up
Against the mounts of despair.

You remind me of my Indian brethren Ever ready to extend Warm hospitality.

Courage

They pushed you
Back and back and back,
And fenced the ways to life.

You moved back
With strength and courage
To advance ahead and ahead.

Today you are at the top of the hill With the Sun and the smile Watching the lengthened shadows And the bloody claws Turning into ashes.

The Foul Air

The foul air spoils
The decent ears.
The silly words
Tuned up
In the abstemious music
Burst into the deep crevasses
Of the velvet hearts
Of gypsy girls.

Up in the strings
They rise and unfurl
The whirls
Of the serpentine frames.

Performing the bits
At the corners and the stands,
They collect the pennies
And flit into the dark lanes
Of the world of scorns

The Hand sublime

I hope and get the wings And rise and rise up Where there are no stings To touch the golden cup.

I wake to see your face The fire and the flames Peep through the furnace To ash the silly names.

I lost the bright arms
Behind the dark at prime
And climb the rainbow warm
To hold the hand sublime.

Strand of faith

Let the time be adverse And let the storm be sore, You wait and hold the wit And gather the might more.

Let the people shout And let the wolves howl, Just cling to the strand of faith And see the God in prowl.

He is there to hold your hand And make you wade across, Bring your sorrows to naught And change your fate in a toss.

The Canvass of Your Heart

The canvass of your heart Holds some rugged terrains And the abysmal faces That impinge upon you Time and again.

The beautiful belle
That sits inside you
Is scared to pulsate
The velvet waist and
Swivel the luring rumps.
You hold your anorexic wishes
In your palms
Undulating.

Ill-clad
You shimmy into blue eyes
All set to gouge
Every bit out of you,
You bring the secrets of
Caramel nights
Spent on the siesta beaches
Of the hot dreams.

Your eyes don't dream.
They aim at bread only.
For centuries they are plain
And numb,
Waiting for the spring flowers
And a rain of happiness.

Surely the time is not far, You dream and march ahead In the battle of life.

A Spurn Tosses Around

A spurn tosses around The intrepid feet. The Gypsy boys have learnt The art of survival.

In the seams of filth
And the debris
Are scattered the Dinars,
The grains of life
And the foul of the city.

A rose beholds the youth
And the doleful heart,
Flickering over
The deadened senses
Of the decrepit people,
Singeing over the clenched fist
Distorting the supple hands
And the wrangled lines of fate.

The Unsung Glory

Did you spot the face palliated And the extinguished eyes, The smothering flickers around, Stifled voice and the sighs?

Did you ever trace the footprints In acrid lands he left behind, Dragging the weight of gloom Under the sky so heavy and unkind?

Muffled under the heavy lids Have you noticed the tone, The tale of glory yet untold The gypsy air sings alone.

The Roma Martyrs

In 1995 at Oberwart
In South-West of Vienna
Cool they stood
For the honour and dignity
Of the glories shrouded
And the crest of the community.

The Gothic-styled Tombstone
That stood ahead
They stared for a while,
And undid the letters
Charcoaled on it
"Gypsies go back to India".

The pipe-bomb concealed behind Blasts onto their face,

And a cruel Nazi mind Brings the four to the ground And to humanity disgrace.

And Lo!
The font of justice dry
As media and police dub it a suicide
For Romas another dismal page
In the history of gloom and cry.

Flags of Hypocrisy

Do the poor have a religion Except poverty; And the trodden Except suffering?

But lo!
They say they only suffered
In the biggest holocaust
And refuse to recognize
The agonies of Romas
As if they have
No hearts to cry.

Today
When the same obnoxious hand
Reverts,
And bleeds the same hearts

With its recrudescent vigor They are alone to scream With the song of melancholy They have been singing For centuries.

In the arrogance of Church And the resonance of bells In the high vaulted domes, The whimpers loose shapes And culvert into the cesspits Of sins.

Another flag hoists
And the funnel flickers
Clenched by the hypocrite fists
At the bottom.

Surrender

In the whirlwind
Of uncertainty
And the tempest of
Fascist waves
Perplexed Roma surrender
At the feet of Jesus.

Jesus is no good,
As was Mohammed,
They kept on changing faith
In the faith of life
And refuge,
But to be duped
Time and again.

May Jesus lift his hand

This time
To bless the brokers of peace
And to the thousands
At his feet in Romania
And the rest of Europe.

For the Domari Brethren

If you are
Unsafe in the crowd
Leave the course
It treads.

So do many Romanis
By tracing varying origins
And histories.
Domaris in Turkey
Make no exception
To the dictum
As they craft new confluences
Into the age old bonds
With Romanis.
If you are left all alone
Don't withdraw,
Since the man first on Everest
Was alone too

For a Roma Child

Do you see a bread On the rounded moon, A deep lore in the lap And a crumb on the noon.

For there on the moonscapes Would be no devil No spurns, no hankerings Just God and no evil.

Would you fly to the land With wings of fancy and dreams Leaving your mom behind To run after and scream.

No! I see the moon silver And dream of the golden land, Free from the mangled heads And mom holding my hand.

From the Rags to Rule

From the narrow alleys
And the streets
Of the shanties and huts,
The caravan-mobile,
You rocket straight into the sky
Of high commands.

Your feet in the Parliament Speak of the struggle And the history Roma have written With their blood.

You stand alone Among the power-mongers, Who peel the flesh Like wolves And panic the innocuous hearts With their hawk-eyes.

Still you dare
To look into the jingoistic eyes
And engineer new ways
For the progress of the Roma people.

You are an unsung hero
Of the unheard voices
Wading across the tumult
To hoist a flag of dignity and honour.

Sleepless Nights

Man looks for happiness Prosperity and superfluous life, And toils hard To have the gain From the webs of pain.

Does pain grope for man?

The centuries' long war
Of the wretched
And discriminated
Against the fascist minds,
And the plots of plunder
Engineered by the racist hands
Articulate the valiance of those
Who once moved out of India
In search of a more dignified life.
The somnambules
Of the sleepless nights
Insinuate a new era

Where swords of wisdom And the flashes of the prowess Shake hands to shake the world.

The Silent War

The silent war
That has lived up for centuries
And dampened millions of eyes
Of the wretched Roma
Continues to haunt
The whole generation.

History is not written.
It's a brushwork
Of the fascist minds
Who nail the salient throbs
And splatter the blood of millions
To drench the white pulp
Turned into pages.

Can you conceal the Sun With the blanket of dark eyes? Can you steal the ort

From the hands of moon Who calls on you every year Like Santa Claus To dole out love and peace?

The Weeping Willows

Aaye Romale, Aaye Chhavale You sing so well. Your voice bears the tinge Of screams and the groans Of centuries That once charmed Hitler And now his progeny.

You weave your pain patiently. It blooms like a lily Shrouded by the weeping willows.

The rigorous harangue
That you deliver
Can make fissures
In the high vaults
Of the churches and the temples.

And the screams Can perforate the blue sky Right above.

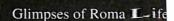
Do you have the clouds To inundate the fire of racism?

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History is not written.
It's a brushwork
Of the fascist minds
Who nail the salient throbs
And splatter the blood of millions
To drench the white pulp
Turned into pages.

















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