

*Early Morning*  
*The Blue Jay*  
*Sitting on the tamarisk*  
*Suddenly took off*  
*For the infinite blue of the sky.*  
*Some memory,*  
*Some dream flashed.*  
*It soared*  
*Higher and higher*  
*Leaving behind*  
*The nest*  
*And dear chicks.*  
*Now it's no more*  
*A mother,*  
*It's a mere female.*

[The Female]

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# LEELTAANS

(THE BLUE JAY)

Kanhaiya Lal Sethia



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Kanhaiya Lal Sethia

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*LEELTAANS,*  
(The Blue Jay)

The Sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

*Courtesy* : National Museum, New Dehli.

Sahitya Akademi Award-Winning Rajasthani Poems

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# LEELTAANS

(The Blue Jay)

**Kanhaiya Lal Sethia**

*Translated by*  
**Shyam Mathur**



**Sahitya Akademi**

*Leeltaans* : English translation by Shyām Mathur of Kanhaiya Lal Sethia's Akademi award-winning collection of poems in Rajasthani, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, (1996) Rs. 55.

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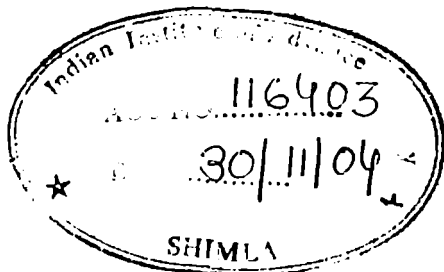
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## Contents

THE FEMALE / 7	EQUAL RELATIONS / 29
COGNIZANCE / 8	THE FIRE OF LIFE / 30
THE INFORMER / 9	THE DIFFERENCE / 31
THE STRANGER / 10	THE FAITH / 32
THE TRUTH AND	THE GRIEF / 33
THE FALSEHOOD / 11	THE DEEDS COUNT / 34
THE TRUTH / 12	BACKBITING / 35
THE REALITY AND	HOLLOW GREATNESS / 36
THE DREAM / 13	THE PYTHON'S TRAIL / 37
THE MANIDHAR SNAKE / 14	SOW THE CHAFF / 38
THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN / 15	THE WEST AND THE EAST / 39
THE SIGHT / 16	THE HOME OF JEWELS / 40
THE FORMLESS / 17	THE LAMPS OF WISDOM / 41
GOD / 18	BHISHMA / 42
SAGUN - NIRGUN / 19	THE BETRAYAL AND
THE RAAG AND THE NAAD / 20	THE BOND / 44
THE UNATTACHED / 21	THE IDENTITY / 45
SAAPEKSHA / 22	THE FEAR / 46
NIRAPEKSHA / 23	ONE VIEW - TWO FACTS / 47
THE FREEDOM / 24	POETRY / 48
THE RULE / 25	THE MOTHERLAND / 49
THE FEAR / 26	SUFFERING INCARNATE / 50
TYAAG AND BHOG / 27	THE VILLAGE / 51
HELL AND HEAVEN / 28	THE CITY-1 / 53



THE CITY-2 / 54  
THE VICTORY MARCH / 55  
DESTINY / 56  
THE DUST-STORM / 58  
THE EARTH'S CENTRE / 60  
THE CALL OF THE GOAL / 61  
THE SMELL OF  
    THE NEW GRAIN / 62  
THE CREATIVE WRITER / 63  
THE SPRING / 65  
THE SUMMER / 67  
THE WINTER / 68

THE MONSOON / 70  
THE DAY / 71  
THE SACRED ASH / 72  
THE BIRTHDAY / 73  
THE VISION OF THE SONGS / 74  
THE NECTAR OF THE WORD / 76  
COME TO SENSES ! / 77  
THE EVENING / 79  
PLAY / 80  
RAM NAAM / 81  
THE AFTERNOON / 82  
THE UNABASHED DUEL / 83

## THE FEMALE

Early Morning  
The Blue Jay  
Sitting on the tamarisk  
Suddenly took off  
For the infinite blue of the sky.  
Some memory,  
Some dream flashed.  
It soared  
Higher and higher  
Leaving behind  
The nest  
And dear chicks.  
Now it's no more  
A mother,  
It's a mere female.

## COGNIZANCE

Ever since  
Cognizance,  
The daughter of Perception,  
Has come of age  
Poor Meanings,  
Her childhood chums  
And playmates  
Till now,  
Lurk around in fear.  
Earlier  
Everything white was milk.  
Now,  
On the counsel of  
Her new companion  
Heart,  
She looks for  
Diamonds and jewels  
In pieces of glass.  
In order to gauge falsehood  
She has torn the truth  
Into shreds.  
As she looks at  
The misdoings  
Of her offspring  
Perception is deeply grieved.  
The girl has jumped the threshold  
Now, what can be done ?

## THE INFORMER

I agree  
That you have expert inside knowledge  
Of the intricacies of this forest  
The lion's den,  
The python's cavern,  
The sweet water pond,  
The mango and jamun<sup>1</sup> trees  
All lie on your feet.  
But don't you exhibit  
your knowledge  
Running all around.  
A new wayfarer  
Would go astray  
Seeing the tracks  
In all directions.  
You should,  
By treading repeatedly on it,  
Widen the path  
That leads  
Out of the dense forest.

---

1. A fruit, a black plum.

## THE STRANGER

This simple face  
That you see  
Is not mine.  
With this face  
If I go home  
They'll take me  
To be a stranger,  
My wife and  
The neighbours.

## THE TRUTH AND THE FALSEHOOD

Of the millstones  
The lower one  
Is Truth,  
The upper one  
Falsehood.  
Truth has a nail  
Piercing its chest  
And Falsehood  
A support at its back.

## THE TRUTH

The truth  
Like a shared possession  
Suffers neglect.  
The dream,  
Like the apple of his eye  
The beholder pampers.

## THE REALITY AND THE DREAM

Before the eyes  
The plantain orchards  
The coconut groves  
The blue sea  
The golden fish  
The silvery shells  
The milk-white conches.

Growing in the vision  
*Ker<sup>1</sup>* and *Khejra<sup>2</sup>*  
*Babool<sup>3</sup>* and *Rohira<sup>4</sup>*  
Peacocks, sand-dunes,  
Desolate solitudes.  
Which is the reality  
And which the dream ?

---

1 to 4. Bushes and trees that grow in the deserts of Rajasthan.



## THE MANIDHAR SNAKE<sup>1</sup>

The mind  
A *manidhar* snake.  
Keeps the gem aside  
At midnight  
And in its light  
Has its grub.  
At that moment  
My consciousness goes to sleep.  
Left in the hands  
Is the dung of knowledge,  
I wake up and regret  
Where is the gem then ?

---

1. A legendary snake believed to bear a gem on its head.

## THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN

Behind the man  
An unseen crowd,  
Behind the soul  
The unseen Supreme.  
They  
Come into view  
When  
One fights  
Or one loves.

## THE SIGHT

Where on the tree  
Will grow  
A thorn  
A bud  
A shoot  
A fruit  
Only Nature knows.  
I am soil,  
My vision  
Only perceives a seed.

## THE FORMLESS

Where does  
The evident  
Need a proof ?  
Peel an onion  
And find  
In the form  
The formless.

## GOD

Who has seen  
God ?  
The answer  
To this question  
Is the pond here  
That hasn't seen  
The sea.

## SAGUN - NIRGUN

I don't play the *sitar*,  
It plays me.  
My consciousness  
Is bound to its vibrations  
As the flame of a lamp to the wick.  
On touching the strings  
The blind fingers get into motion,  
Listening to its music  
*Sagun'* turns into *nirgun'*<sup>2</sup>

- 
1. Possessed of the material attributes.
  2. Without the material attributes.

## THE RAAG AND THE NAAD

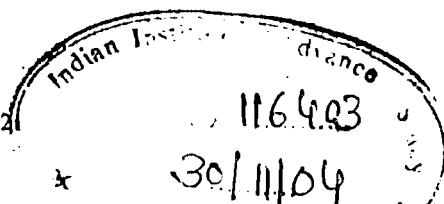
A flute  
Has five holes  
And a conch  
But one.  
That's Just  
The difference  
Between *raag*<sup>1</sup> and *naad*<sup>2</sup>  
One is Gita manifest  
The other *vedas* incarnate.

- 
1. A melody
  2. A tone

## THE UNATTACHED

Numerous forms  
Of beauty and youth  
Does it encounter  
But the mirror  
Doesn't ally  
Its heart  
With its vision.

LEELTAANS / 21





## *SAAPEKSHA'*

Of the seven strings  
One broke,  
The sitar  
Turned into fuel.

Of the five elements  
One got sapped,  
The sentience  
was rendered worthless.

---

1. In relation to something or somebody.

## *NIRAPEKSHA*

After lighting  
The lamp  
The tired sun,  
Free from worries,  
Sleeps undaunted  
In his celestial palace.

---

1. Unconcerned (The opposite of saapeksha)

## THE FREEDOM

In my courtyard  
Blossom  
Red, White, Yellow  
Flowers of the oleander.  
The soil, the sky,  
The branches and the leaves  
Are all the same.  
From where did  
The different colours arise ?  
Who granted this freedom  
To their intellect  
That they perceived the truth  
According to their own visions ?

## THE RULE

A thief has  
Strong hands  
But weak feet.  
Nature, as a rule,  
Imparts some shortcoming or the other.  
Or else  
This weird assortment  
Of creation  
Would have been torn asunder  
Long ago.

## THE FEAR

The ant  
Saw an elephant.  
Beholding a moving mountain,  
Frightened,  
It went into its hole.  
The elephant  
Saw an ant.  
Finding death crawling in front  
It raised its trunk.

## *TYAAG' AND BHOG<sup>2</sup>*

On the tree top  
A flower bloomed,  
Spread its fragrance  
And decayed.  
A crow perched,  
Spotted some prey  
And flew away.

- 
1. Sacrifice.
  2. The experience of pleasure.

## HELL AND HEAVEN

A garbage heap.  
Hell to a flower,  
Heaven to a seed.

## EQUAL RELATIONS

Life and death  
Are friends,  
An identical mutual relation.  
For both *jiva*<sup>1</sup> is the husband.  
It, however, discriminates.  
While for the one it has  
Marital bliss,  
It's widowhood for the other.  
But when the flame blows out  
Death, the deserted one,  
Will abide and commit *sati*<sup>2</sup>.

---

1. The soul.

2. The custom of a Hindu woman burning herself in her husband's funeral pyre.



## THE FIRE OF LIFE

In the fire of life  
Hungry death  
Bakes its bread.  
When the fire gets dim  
It revives it back  
By blowing on it.  
Perhaps  
The bread is still  
Unbaked.

## THE DIFFERENCE

A feeble wave  
Broke  
Before reaching the destination.  
Somewhat upset  
The frog leapt  
And quickly held  
A fresh wave by the finger.  
Watching this  
I had a feeling  
That if life stops its march  
How would it be  
Different from death ?

## THE FAITH

A lamp sees  
Neither the rise  
of the sun  
Nor its setting.  
A seed sees  
Neither the growth  
Of the tree  
Nor its fruiting.  
But  
They have faith  
In burning,  
In perishing.

## THE GRIEF

Grief  
Is the milk of a lioness.  
It demands  
A milking pot of gold.  
Frail containers would crack.  
It's mercury.  
It flows  
In a trickle  
Of tears.

## THE DEEDS COUNT

Man  
May be good  
Or evil  
It's the time  
That matters.

Looks  
May be comely  
Or ugly  
It's the virtue  
That is trusted.

Life  
May be long  
Or short  
It's the deeds  
That count.

## BACKBITING

The credulous Sun  
Slaughtered poor darkness,  
The father of the stars.  
But how long  
Did the envious  
And backbiting  
Lamps live ?

## HOLLOW GREATNESS

As good as  
Not being there  
A camel's hump  
Is worthless greatness.  
In the proper place  
Is poor *eeder'*  
That is the support  
For sitting.

- 
1. The horny callosity on a camel's chest on which it rests its weight when it sits.

## THE PYTHON'S TRAIL

It's not a footpath  
It's the trail of a python.

Come back,  
Your perception  
Is still a babe.  
Death, hiding in a hole,  
Waits for the prey.  
Heed the call of consciousness,  
O impetuous wayfarer!  
This is not your path.



## SOW THE CHAFF

If not the seed  
Sow the chaff.  
It may not grow  
But you do grab the land.  
If marvels can't be performed  
you just turn somersaults  
And get your name recorded  
Among the heroes  
Merely by posing as one.

## THE WEST AND THE EAST

Fighting Nature  
Is the culture of the West.  
Harmony  
Is the culture of the East.  
Where the sun is mild  
They need  
The light in their vision,  
Where it is strong  
They need the light of the soul.  
The life in the west  
Is an unending race,  
While in the east  
It's a point  
To stop and muse.  
With such a little difference  
In the west is born war  
In the east the *Buddha*.

## THE HOME OF JEWELS

Where does a lake  
Have a heart  
That can hold fire in it ?  
An ocean alone  
Has the capacity  
To hold marine fires.  
It dare not manifest  
On the face  
The hot ashes  
It swallows within.

The same embers  
Turn into pearls and diamonds.  
Otherwise  
Who would call  
Mere brine  
*Ratnakar*<sup>1</sup> ?

---

1. The home of jewels.

## THE LAMPS OF WISDOM

You may go on  
Blowing your breath  
Or heaping dust on them  
It will neither smother  
Nor extinguish  
These brilliant lamps.  
If at all you want  
Their light to fade away  
Shut your eyes  
And rejoice in  
An unrestrained conduct.  
You won't see then  
Your own shadow.

## *BHISHMA<sup>1</sup>*

After roaming  
In sandal woods  
The sun's chariot  
Has turned back  
To the north.  
Under the hoofs  
Of its horses  
Himalaya's pride  
Got crushed,  
Slender streams  
Have begun to swell.  
In the family of time  
Are bred tall days  
And dwarf nights.  
Rebellious seeds  
Have come out of the earth  
Breaking the captivity.  
The trampled grass  
Has raised its head.  
Lying on the bed of

- 
1. The grand uncle of *Pandavas* in the *Mahabharat*.  
He lay on a bed of arrows at the time of the great war.  
His soul left his body after the war when the sun was  
over the northern hemisphere.

pain and poverty,  
The *Bhishma* of the age  
Has waited for  
This precise moment.  
Now of his own volition  
He will abandon his body.

## THE BETRAYAL AND THE BOND

The pitcher broke  
And the lamp got blown out.  
Water and fire  
Quit instantly.  
The flower withered  
And the dream got disrupted  
But the scent and the soul  
Survived.

## THE IDENTITY

In these very moments  
There is  
The timeless moment,  
you only need to perceive.  
In these very words  
There is  
The supreme sermon,  
You only need to discern.  
In these very notes  
There is  
The Divine note  
You only need to identify.



## THE FEAR

Jackals roam in the jungle  
Hawks hover in the sky  
Snakes crawl on the pathway  
But hunger is the greatest fear of all  
That doesn't allow  
The sheep to stay in the pen  
The pigeon in the nest  
The feet at home.

## ONE VIEW - TWO FACTS

For one meal  
Let it be without salt,  
We'll not get a rupee changed.  
By the evening  
Or the next morning  
Some *Moonj* <sup>1</sup> will get sold  
And we shall have  
Some change.

Money  
Is like dirt on the palm.  
' Spend it.  
Has *Laxmi* <sup>2</sup> ever settled  
At one place ?  
Then why worry ?  
It's fortunate to spend.

- 
1. A kind of rope made out of straw.
  2. The Hindu Goddess of wealth.

## POETRY

Poetry is the balance  
For weighing  
The potential of a language.  
In the woodpile of words  
Poetry is  
sandalwood.

It's a whole truth,  
Poetry is neither new  
Nor old.  
It is the sign  
Of the smouldering  
Embers in  
Man's heart.  
An experience  
That defies description,  
Poetry is not  
An arena for wrestling.  
It's a remedy for the soul,  
And not the rental  
For the earthly body.

## THE MOTHERLAND

I don't have  
The Himalaya on my border,  
The Ganga and the Yamuna  
In my courtyard,  
Sandal and *devdar*<sup>1</sup> in my woods,  
Cashew and *kewra*<sup>2</sup> in my garden.

I have  
On my border  
The memorials to  
Brave soldiers,  
A courtyard sodden with blood,  
Woods in saffron outfit,  
*Foag*<sup>3</sup> and *khejra*<sup>4</sup>  
The eyewitnesses to *jauhar*<sup>5</sup>.

- 
1. A cedar tree.
  2. Pandanus, a bush with fragrant flowers.
  3. and 4. Trees that grow generally in desert areas.
  5. The custom of Rajput women jumping into fire to escape being captured alive by the enemy.

## SUFFERING INCARNATE

On the chest of the wood  
The hamlet  
Is Like a boil.  
The ragged  
Crimson dress  
Of the mistress  
Is the redness of inflammation.  
The master's  
Tattered white turban  
Is the pus.  
The ugly, dark, hungry children  
Swarm around like flies.  
Suffering incarnate !  
It has throbbing pain,  
And it's yet to open.

## THE VILLAGE

The nest of this one-eyed dove  
Is in the *peepul* in the  
Locality of the *jats*<sup>1</sup>.  
This bald crow  
Has laid her eggs on the neem across the lane.  
This shaggy dog.  
Is from the *dhane*<sup>2</sup> of the dyers.  
The cow of Heeru, the potter,  
Has borne a she-calf yesterday,  
There'll be some milk  
For the children.  
Last night there was *jagaran*<sup>3</sup>  
At the house of Moti, The tanner,  
The guests got a nice treat.  
These foot-marks are Man Dasji's,  
Where has he gone  
So early in the morning ?  
Boys, the pods of the haunted *khejra* tree  
Aren't good.  
Don't you eat them  
Or else you'll keep vomiting.  
Sohan *mali*'s she camel  
Died recently in her delivery.

---

1. A caste.

2. Hamlet.

3. Keeping awake in the night to sing and pray.

Village  
Is the name of  
Familiarity and fellow-feeling.  
Here  
The soul is supreme.

## THE CITY-1

The city,  
A wounded solitude.  
The mighty bull of noise  
Came in  
Breaking its invisible door and fence.  
The sky got stuck in its horns,  
The earth got smeared with its dung,  
And life got trampled under its hoofs.  
The city,  
A blood-drenched solitude.



## THE CITY-2

The city,  
A rape committed on the virgin solitude  
That resulted in an unwanted conception.  
A misbegotten culture was born.  
Who'd tie the knot with this ill-bred ?  
Poor girl !  
She now spends her days  
As a housemaid.

## THE VICTORY MARCH

Since the very beginning  
Darkness advances  
Covering the footprints of light.  
But as the dawn arrives  
The fellow develops sore feet.  
Dazed and desperate  
It starts a fight  
With a few dozing stars.  
Streams of blood  
Stain the floor of the eastern portal.  
Oblivious of the sacrifice  
Of these little lights  
The great Sun  
Begins its  
Victory march  
Everyday.

## DESTINY

Plentiful rain  
Lush green crops  
*Bajri*<sup>1</sup> that will yield heaps of grain  
*Moth*<sup>2</sup> that will produce basketfuls  
Waist high *guwar*<sup>3</sup>  
Creepers laden with fruit  
Neither *Kaatra*<sup>4</sup> nor *faaka*<sup>5</sup>  
God's mercy  
Happy times  
Bumper crops,  
The farmer has  
His eyes full of dreams,  
Heart full of content.  
But nature bears malice.  
  
Suddenly the wind changes its direction.  
*Nagauran*<sup>6</sup>, the foe,  
Comes in from the south-west.

- 
1. Crop of millet.
  2. Crop of a kind of lentil.
  3. Crop of fodder.
  4. and. 5. Crop-pests.
  6. The wind blowing from the south-east that takes away the rain bearing clouds.

Moisture sinks to the bottom.  
The crops wither.  
It's unexpected famine.  
Man can make artificial rain  
But not artificial wind.  
Man has just two feet  
Destiny has a hundred.

## THE DUST-STORM

Day and night  
The dust-storm blew.  
It turned the land  
A virgin again.  
Furrows disappeared,  
Fields got effaced,  
Dunes and slopes  
Kept shifting,  
Dust soared,  
Sun's vision turned blurry.  
Sand was strewn all over,  
'Twas like a rain of sand.  
Paths got strangled,  
Mounds formed.  
Doves and sparrows  
Cried  
As their nests were blown away.  
Rudely shaken  
Bushes and hedges  
Trembled badly  
And bowed in respect.  
Big banyans and peepals  
Lay flat,  
Their pride perished,  
Their merit waned.  
But  
As the storm ceased,

Black clouds gathered,  
Peacocks sang,  
Birds chirruped,  
The lyre of the land  
Produced melodious notes.  
The plant life  
Forgot its grief.  
The truth revealed was  
That harrowing pain  
Is the mother of creation.

## THE EARTH'S CENTRE

There are many who can  
Merely by fixing a fork  
on the ground  
Locate the earth's centre.  
There are many who can  
joining in other's voices  
Take hypocritical oaths.  
They know  
That a crowd has  
Only tongue and ears.  
Destitute of vision  
They can bear  
A loadful of lies  
not needing  
A balance or weights.  
Whether a trader  
Or a farmer  
They all bow to miracles.  
Nowhere is seen  
A seeker of truth.  
And if at all chanced upon  
One asks for  
A mere pinch or two.  
None seeks substance  
These days.  
It's only noise that  
matters.

## THE CALL OF THE GOAL

Walks  
Branch off the path.  
If they deny it  
And ignore the truth purposely,  
The pure lie  
Doesn't sustain.  
Wherever it may lead,  
To a hamlet  
A pond  
A tree  
A bush  
A field  
Or a barn,  
At the end of the day,  
Whacked and worn out,  
What can a walk do  
But return to the path ?  
How long  
Can it disregard  
The call of the goal ?



## THE SMELL OF THE NEW GRAIN

Don't disregard time.  
If it chooses to avenge  
It'll put you to  
Great humiliation.  
Heed the counsel.  
Winnow with the wind.  
Only then  
Will the husk separate from the grain.  
Otherwise you may lie,  
Wrapped in rags,  
In the barn  
And keep shooing away  
The dogs that defecate  
On the heaps of grain.  
When hunger breaks out  
Your errant soul  
Will at once return  
To the right course.  
Look, it's reached here,  
The smell of the new grain  
Simmering  
In the neighbour's kitchen.

## THE CREATIVE WRITER

It's famine.  
Hunger is making merry.  
The eye of the sky  
Is blanched.  
The earth's face is pale.  
Frightened,  
Water has gone  
Into deep hiding.  
The starved natives  
Have fled.  
All the night  
Peacocks cry in pain.  
The cattle groan.  
Peepal trees,  
That were fed with milk  
By the hands of maidens,  
Stand drying,  
Poor cripples,  
Where could they go !  
And their companions,  
The deities on the village outskirts,  
Are reduced to  
Decaying mud walls  
At the hands of destiny.  
Veracity and wonders are  
What a snack is to the satiated.  
It's a great calamity.

Write about it,  
Get it published.  
Sing the songs of  
Hollow compassion.  
These are the ways  
Of today's writers.  
They play with words  
In their idleness.  
They eat their  
two square meals  
And then they are not concerned.  
Where do we have these days  
Writers who would  
Pray to Nature,  
Have pity in their hearts,  
Shed tears in sympathy,  
Sing *megh malhar*<sup>1</sup>  
And make the miserly *Indra*  
Generous enough  
To open his coffers ?  
That was artistry .  
Now a days  
Even *Prahlad*'s<sup>2</sup> ordeal by fire  
Is a celebration  
For the people.

- 
1. The melody believed to be capable of making rain when sung properly.
  2. A child devotee of the Lord, who was made to sit on a fire by his father Hiranyakashiapu, a demon king.

## THE SPRING

Colourful *Chaitra*<sup>1</sup>  
Makes patterns in henna  
On the palms of Nature.  
The breeze,  
Full of fragrance,  
Performs *ghoomar*<sup>2</sup>  
All around.  
It's a festival  
On the grounds of the wood.  
Song birds have begun  
Their honey-sweet melodies.  
The new, copper-hued,  
Shoots of *peepul*  
Prance in the golden sun rays.

On the *jaal* tree  
Its tiny fruits swing  
Like pink pearls.  
The lustful black-bees  
Hum in the ears of  
Slumberous flower-buds.  
Green parrots flutter  
Holding in their red beaks  
Ruby- like seeds of pomegranate.

- 
1. Month in the Indian calendar that corresponds to the spring season.
  2. A folk dance of Rajasthan.

Playful herds of deers gallop  
Holding soft, new grass  
In their mouths.  
In the silvery night  
The flute plays  
The song of *Moomal'*  
Hearing which  
The earth wails,  
The sky  
Heaves a sigh.

- 
1. A love legend in Rajasthani that has a tragic ending.

## THE SUMMER

Taking its silence  
As the modesty  
of the sky  
Sun, the spoilt brat,  
Climbs over its head,  
Hearing the echo  
of their own utterance  
The innocent partridges  
Go on twittering merrily  
In the woods.  
Blasts of hot wind  
Shake the long tails  
Of peacocks,  
The thirsty squirrels  
Nibble at the green,  
New Shoots on the trees.  
Perching on *neem* trees  
The wicked crows  
Rub one another's beak  
To delude the prey.  
Whirlwinds  
Rise churning the  
Earth's bosom.  
Thus  
The Summer  
Spends its life-time  
Sitting in wild desolation.

## THE WINTER

Bashful  
Like the little flowers of *Chameli*<sup>1</sup>  
Is a winter's day.  
No Sooner than it rises  
The sun  
Longs to set.  
Even at dusk  
It's perfect quietness.  
Chilling cold has descended.  
Fires have been lit.  
*Panghats*<sup>2</sup> are asleep.  
The only sound comes  
From the lone tinkling bell  
Of the herd entering the village  
Or the growls of  
Rutting camels on the track.  
Sky, the old man,  
Is feeling drowsy  
In early evening.  
Back in their nests  
Are doves and peacocks.  
Hares and Mongoose  
Have gone into their holes.

---

1. The jasmine.

2. The place from where the village women carry  
water to their homes.

Fearing the cold  
The entire animal world  
Is Crouching.  
Only foxes, greedy of  
    Water melons,  
Loiter around sniffing  
The heaps of fodder.



## THE MONSOON

*Ashadha*<sup>1</sup> has driven  
The black, bellowing,  
Milch buffaloes  
Into the eastern court  
of the sky.  
It's milking them.  
Lightning, the mistress,  
Roves caressing the cattle,  
And round their neck  
The rainbow is put  
As a talisman  
To ward off  
The evil-eye.

---

1. Month in the Indian calender that corresponds to the monsoon season.

## THE DAY

When Time tills  
The field of sky  
With the plough of the Moon  
Driven by the black bullock  
Of Darkness  
And sows the seeds of Stars,  
The golden harvest  
of the Day is reaped.

## THE SACRED ASH

When the feet  
Don't have  
The sense of direction,  
It's meaningless  
To console the heart  
In regard to the goal.  
Where do you have  
A sun to raise ?  
It's not so easy  
To be the horizon of  
The limitless sky.  
Darkness,  
The fleeing thief,  
Doesn't need a path.  
But the plain truth  
Shall only tread  
The proper track.  
Only the flame  
That burns its own self  
For other's sake  
Shall become  
*Bhabhoor*<sup>1</sup>.

---

1. The sacred ash.

## THE BIRTHDAY

I have frittered away  
Fifty five drops  
Of divine nectar  
Into the sand.  
Now, as soon as  
The damp dries up,  
Death will devour me.

## THE VISION OF THE SONGS

I still recognise  
The face of agony,  
The vision of my songs  
Has not dimmed.  
Truth is still  
In the grip of words,  
Give not to me the walking- stick  
In place of the pen.  
your experienced-reality  
Is yet immature.  
Food and shelter  
Are your sole accomplishments.  
Your innocent consciousness  
Looked for taste  
And overlooked the vital fact  
That life is not a concubine.  
After great consideration  
Had the ancestors  
Set up the eternal values  
For humanity.  
Create anew !  
Leave fresh footprints  
On the path to the goal.  
Why should anyone object ?

But in your passion for fame,  
For making just a little lace  
Out of its hide,  
Don't kill a milch buffalo.

## THE NECTAR OF THE WORD

Writer,  
Don't use your pen  
Like the flute  
Of an amorous swain  
Or the brush  
Of a prurient painter.  
It's the *sanjivani*<sup>1</sup>  
From Mother *Saraswati*<sup>2</sup>  
It imparts light  
To the flame of the soul,  
It clears the mist  
That shrouds life.  
Perceive its potential.  
Waste not  
In tawdry sing-song  
And coarse imagery  
The divine nectar  
That drips  
From its tip.

- 
1. A medicine supposed to bring the dead back to life.
  2. The Hindu Goddess of wisdom.

## COME TO SENSES !

On the trees  
There are more birds  
And fewer leaves.  
The starving masses  
Can't be contained  
In the village-lanes.  
Being hungry  
The fields themselves  
Swallow the seeds sown.  
Feeling thirsty  
The streams themselves  
Drink all the rain-water.  
The earth wails  
The sea swells  
The sky shivers  
Perhaps *Shiva* is  
Preparing for the destruction  
Of the creation.  
Serpents of commotion  
Strike repeatedly with their hoods  
The *Nandi*<sup>1</sup> of pride bellows  
Flinging dust with its horns.  
But Mother *Parvati*  
Hasn't yet lost hope.

---

1. The bull on which Lord Shiva rides.



She has not handed  
The *damru*<sup>1</sup> and the *trishul*<sup>2</sup> to him.  
The destined is being averted.  
Man,  
Come to your senses !  
Before Shiva adopts  
The *tandava*<sup>3</sup> posture  
Follow the path of *Satya*<sup>4</sup>.  
Heed to the *Sunder*<sup>5</sup>  
Within yourself.

- 
1. A small hand-drum and
  2. A trident, both held by Shiva while performing
  3. The dance of destruction.
  4. The truth
  5. The beautiful.

## THE EVENING

One evening  
Left behind,  
Another is in front.  
The exiled sun said,  
“It seems that  
Of the doings of my own light  
There’s going to be in the night  
Thunder and lightning,  
Storm and squall.  
I have nothing  
But a slender match-stick  
Of a ray,  
Should I light the lamps  
Or ignite the stars ?  
In a quandary,  
What a plight!  
Where to go ?”  
Hearing this  
Hope hidden in the heart  
Said, “Don’t you throttle me,  
your goal  
Is within my reach.”

## PLAY

Those who can  
knock down and seize  
The Sky  
Or inveigle and freeze  
Time,  
Such fortunate  
Poets and writers  
Aren't yet born.  
Water and wind  
Earth and fire  
All move  
On the signal from these two  
And stop  
When they stop.  
The seasons  
Revolve round them.  
It's they  
Who grow and prosper,  
Die and decay.  
They govern  
Every affair of the creation.  
For the two of them  
The entire living world  
Is **their** play.

## RAM NAAM

A cage of gold  
A velvet cover  
Fruit and raisins  
In bejewelled bowls  
The parrot is taught  
To speak  
*Radhe-Shyam.*

Sitting in the lane  
Right opposite,  
The starving blind man  
Breathed his last  
Chanting *Ram-naam.*

## THE AFTERNOON

After bathing  
In the village tank  
The virgin afternoon of  
*Jyestha*<sup>1</sup>  
Sprawls on its bank.  
Finding the lass alone  
The naughty mice  
tease her.  
And when she throws  
The shadow of a kite  
On the ground,  
They run and hide  
In their holes.

---

1. The month of the Indian Calender corresponding to the summer.

## THE UNABASHED DUEL

I am fighting  
Single handed  
An unseen battle.  
Ego, the enemy of the intellect  
Hasn't till this moment  
Been trapped  
in the maze of words.  
My vanquished thoughts  
Lie in books  
With faces stained black.  
Standing on the fringe  
Of my mind  
The unabashed duel  
Ridicules me.

