

The Punjabi humor*

(in memory of Taufiq Rafat)

By Rizwan Akhtar

(i)

The sun is a burning ball with spikes
earth salt-white crumbling mask
the river Chenab avoids crowding hands
twirling his moustache like a harlequin
the farmer mounts on a tractor
sputtering the dumb-show of his life
chafing his sweating beard
belching mango-pickle-breath
with a chipped-teeth smile.

(ii)

The goats and dogs like stray troupes
graze passing patches of grass
sprinkle droppings and coiled turds
there mime is slow but sure
like the train crawling through fields
smoky beauty honking dazed buffaloes
and complicit electricity poles.

(iii)

Huddled on a scrubby charpoy
mouths sank in bowls of curdling
no longer old men consider medicines
cough phlegm on a brown soil
the breeding stage of their anecdotes
crackling and sleepy.

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