

from *THOT-J-BAP*,
the Gujarati Fragments

Renée Sarojini Saklikar

Arée, Arée, Lakhan/Lachlan —

અને અમે ભૂત હોઈએ છીએ
Anē amē bhūta hō'īē chīē

And we, being ghosts

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And we, being ghosts

and to the unfettered

Away to, across, despite distance — Time —
Outside Perimeter, that old Quarter,
Moon Mistress, ignored, her knowing smile turned,

તેઓ ક્યારે ક્યારેય શીખશે?
Tē'ō kyārē kyārēya śikhaśē?

Magda, the river, ashes, un/spoken.
Four brothers, their father, three bricks, that girl
Away to, across, despite distance — Time —
Thieved, plundered, hoped, we, moon-compelled, ran —

તેઓ ક્યારે ક્યારેય શીખશે?
Tē'ō kyārē kyārēya śikhaśē?

Bird, unfaithful Queen: long, slow, un-blinking —
Where they bit, drew blood, small stains, beds in rows
Tribal, those parts, cities once built, against —
Away to, across, despite distance — Time —
Her true to keep calm, whispered women, biding,
Dead: and would she meet them one day, roses —

તેઓ ક્યારે ક્યારેય શીખશે?
Tē'ō kyārē kyārēya śikhaśē?

in arms. Standing—

Turning to those three, she kneeled: write to me—
Imagine: forever, she told us that—
The hand of Fatima, amethyst hooked,
વરસાદના ગીતો, હુમ દોડ્યો
Varasādanā gītō, hum dōḍyō

Single stranded leather, five sounds, his hair—
And in that place, they found the bees, thousands,
Turning to those three, she kneeled: write to me—
Or imagine, said the woman at the gate
વરસાદના ગીતો, હુમ દોડ્યો
Varasādanā gītō, hum dōḍyō

Those lethal small dips, mercury, skin-in,
Those lost metalworkers, disbanded and,
Amalgam to alloy, we ran from them
Turning to those three, she kneeled: write to me—
Intermittent, those old photographs showed—
This gift to waken: song, and wondered if—

Provisional, in the name of—

They were confidantes, close friends: cycling
heaths—
You can't pin that one on me, he said, I'm clean.
His eyes, her body: lips to [], knock, breathe,
shine—

મને પૂછશો નહીં
Manē pūchaśō nahīm

Outside, a thousand armies: tanks, guns, sticks
A narrow cut, those rolls, stored. My-Lar, sheets
They were confidantes, close friends: cycling
heaths—
Evenings, to the train station, they walked,

મને પૂછશો નહીં
Manē pūchaśō nahīm

The only way this works, he said: Adore—
How to make magic in times of trouble,
That's the first time in my life I wore my,
They were confidantes, close friends: cycling
heaths—
Lakhan/Lachlan, cried the Raipur Boys, O
Addaad al-Turaab, all her names, decades,

exaltation among

Absence their presence was, strangeness, a grace
All her secrets, lavender, scent released
Those prisoners, holes in palms, feet, marching
through

શું અહીં લાવે છે
Śum ahīm lāvē chē

The twelve Ghats, *arée, arée*, Lutchman, he—
Would they stay true to anything, she asked,
Absence their presence was, strangeness, a grace
Four o'clocks, champa, yellow Ixora

શું અહીં લાવે છે
Śum ahīm lāvē chē

Hibiscus: horned trumpets, pistil, stamens,
They had come in from the Rann of Kutch
Rigveda and counting, those Banni grasslands
Absence their presence was, strangeness, a grace
Could taste salt, standing water, mudflats, and,
Uplifted, shallow, closed off from the sea —

the long usurpation—

Give us a kiss, then, he said, arriving,
Thorny scrub, rivers to drain, that delta
Traced, a lake so wide and deep, they called to—

Captured upstream, a thousand years, Indus,
They named the girls for her tributaries
Give us a kiss, then, he said, arriving,
Bet, beta, Deekrah—hamlet's edge at night

અમને ચુંબન આપો
Amanē cumbana āpō

Ah, those ghost lights, dancing, grass to the wet
Full moon on salt, a city of tents, they,
And said, Eh, Eh, Rabari, mirrored-in,
Give us a kiss, then, he said, arriving,
He rubbed three beads on her belly, parted,
Territorial disputes, sliced open—

તારો નામ?
and your name is—

Taro Nam soo Ché
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