My Father's Chappals

My father's chappals—

Placed on the stair Beside its newel—sitting there As if an old, museum crown Of some emir. It's garnet-brown Hue's like Kashmiri apples'. A pair of wonder When I was four. My feet—mere tetra fish before These leather-made collosal squids. "How long will I remain a kid?" I often used to ponder. Now pale in shine, They still retain Their rank like gold in dulled gold chains. With passing years, a father's prize Transformed itself, shrank to a size That fits these feet of mine.

A Ceiling Fan's Life (is like a man's)

On wintry days, it rarely spins

Except when mopped floors need to dry.

Its mission, once December's in,

Is just to idly hang on high

And watch us squabble, cackle, cry

In earthy dramas' peace and strife.

This is the childhood of its life.

When April faintly sobs, "Adieu,"

And week by hot week May draws near,

We switch it on, but for a few

Minutes when noon rays singe and sear.

Though used at this time of the year,

It's mostly idle—just a teen

Fixed on that childish, old routine.

As summer's tri-month gang stands tall,

Subduing springtime's pleasant breeze,

Its duty never ends at all.

Two great responsibilities:

To cool us down and bring us peace

Of sleep. It toils without a halt—

Hence, finally, a true adult.

When autumn and his peer monsoon

Arrive, their north wind takes its place.

Less burdened now, it hears the tune

Of drizzle that glows nature's face.

Indeed, a sweet, relaxing phase.

It hardly spins—once in a while—

When middle age comes with a smile.

The days of winter come again—
This time as life's enfeebling stage.
Now gathering dust, it is a den
For crawlers. No one to assuage
This plight or clean the blades: old age.
It lies unseen above our heads,
Forgotten, hushed, alive, and dead.

To a Mirror

How long will you keep showing man

His outer, fleeting states

And not the dictum written on

The pages of his fate?

Why is your fervour only for

The phoney and the snide?

They sneer at you; you do the same,

And thus enlarge their pride.

But one who, honest, when deceived,

Ravaged, and torn apart,

Slow-weeps before you, you don't show

The sun within his heart.

Dawn

To have a glimpse of calmness, look at dawn—

The time before the phase of short-term death

Of Earth is finally complete.

Observe the walls intake each cooling breath;

Their tension from the previous night is gone.

Burnt out, they rest now, feet to feet.

Those flowers don't perform their dance for you;

Like droopy ballerinas, they repose

Inside the cold ceramic vase.

Even the camelback is in a pose,

As if some yogi's deftly coursing through

Great depths of meditative space.

And all the things that make you think of noise—

The keyboard, xerox, quartz clock, telephone—

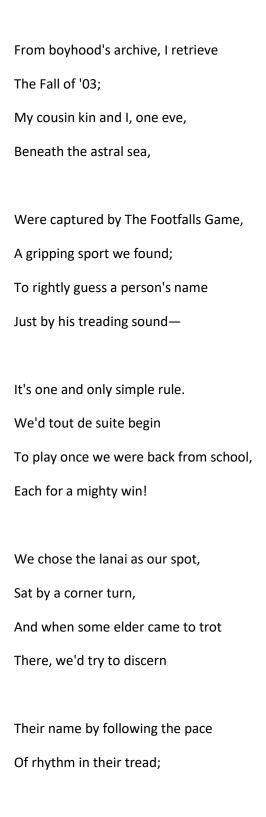
Now lie in their respective graves,

Unwilling to be roused and fiercely thrown

Into this world's shore. Like you, they've no choice

Except to submit to its waves.

The Footfall's Game



Throat clearings, coughs would make our case

An easy one instead.

A war with whispers: "That's your brother!"

"You're wrong! That's Pradip uncle!

I know his gait is like no other

Because he tends to shuffle."

The one to pronto answer right

In every sequence, won,

And dipped within this great delight,

Our childhood made its run.

Now age's fog has blurred my view.

My skin's all pocks and flakes.

These tubes are all I'm married to,

And I don't know the stakes

Of yet another surgery.

Vim's candle has snuffed out;

The pillars of my memory

Are now no longer stout.

A visitor, one nippy day,

Brought comfort to my soul;

Old childhood zephyr came my way And made my bosom whole. The doorknob creaked; a once-felt air Purged my room's atmosphere. "Dear Shyam," I said. "Please grab a chair. I'm happy you are here." His soft response, "Good afternoon," Appeased my longing ears. The veil of souring lifted soon, Which kept us cold for years. His whatabouts...some words exchanged, Deep sighs, and then some pauses: A tough task for two souls estranged To put aside the causes That severed them long years ago. "Your smile's just like before. He uttered. "But how did you know It was me at the door?"

 $\hbox{\it "Ah, well, I'm spavined, frail, and ill.}\\$

Oh, boy, indeed," I said,

But I am not yet short of skill;

I knew you from your tread."

Four wizened cheeks and bowed eyelids,

Some deep but silent sighs;

An ICU; two hoary kids;

Slow brooklets from their eyes.