

## KHAND II: *l'observatoire de clingnotement*

---

### NARRATOR:

The second chapter of Jantar Mantar by Jyotishi Triyambak describes that fateful day of May 18, 1910 - when his stars are most inauspicious, and Halley's Comet is about to appear. After the loss of his newspaper horoscope, what calamity would befall him next? Never to be defeated, Triyambak starts performing a dangerous tantric rite to...write and transmit his predictions, simultaneously – into the future. He manipulates Time to do this, and we may wonder – how did they keep Time, those people of old Bombay?

### Keeping Time

Wristwatches and grandfather clocks were many in this city, but every clock needed to be wound and calibrated to something else that had found the *precise* Time, or as we say in Bombay, *ghanta!* From the edges of the beach, hung-a diagonally from the distant island of Karanja, you see the elevated grandeur of Malabar Hill, where anybody who was anyone could still live a charmed life, the royalty of a prince. From the windows of Malabar Hill, if we squints Through a Clear sky, you will see the Observatory which signals both the Time-balls, Bombay Castle's and at Prince's Dock, dropping in tandem. Messages flowing smoothly between them. The Observatory watches the motions of winds, the stars, the constellations floating like apparitions, space stations An array of barographs, thermographines, fine! Magnetospheres and recorders of sunshine, Shine! sidereal clocks, anemometers, machines breathing The elements are kept under observation, beeping. daily humidity, a summer's night, how dry. Like an Eye of Time, it silently thinks, watches and blinks, watches and blinks.

समय के आँखें झपकत, पलकत

पल एक बून्दे-अशकत टपकत

### 2.1

The Time-Ball falls down a long perpendicular tube, - splitting time with a dissection<sup>1</sup>, into little cube

---

<sup>1</sup> Like Dedekind's knife dissects the numbers of the world into great and small - "All of you who are before the knife, go left! All numbers after the knife, go right! The rest of you, stay here. We need to talk about your irrational behavior." See *A Tour Of The Calculus*, by David Berlinski

Before and after, followed by a siren. One hang above the Bombay Castle, the iron goes DANG!!!! before 2 PM, and DING!!! afterwards. At 8:30 PM Prince's Dock drops the other. Carpe diem, The Parsee cotton merchant sets his industry to the orb, nods his head at the circuitry. The Waterworks, servants of the Crown, poultry traders from all over the world, taverns sultry and eating houses, factory labor, fishermen going to the sea – everyone, the clerk a hand of time sweeps across the bay, a clever mime silently at work.

*Mook mook kyoon haath hilaye  
Hilate haath samay koo banayein  
Yeh bhavishvaani, bahut purani  
Jantar Mantar Suno Kahani  
Ganaganath gaye hain tab-tak  
Alha Bind sunaye tab-tak*

### Alha Bind Intro

ALHA- BIND  
*Salam-valekum, jai hind!  
Faster than wind, aapke manind  
your trusted driver - "Al-ha Bind!*

### 2.3

Amaan Lassoon! Lassoon! Louder?!  
Sassoon docks of Bombay, mail-day, travelers  
Dis-embarking from The P. and O. liner's  
long oceanic journey, resting. The Taj Mahal  
Hotel bursting flowers, a reception, the betrothal  
of a Parsee cotton tycoon's daughter<sup>2</sup>. Pom-poms  
Motor cars of guests, chauffeurs in uniforms,  
starched white. Waiting with our Victoria,  
the simpleton charioteer has a strange fuss,  
a phobia of the Telegraph. Jyotishi had alerted us  
of his arrival by the wire, and true to his repute,  
we saw it as a forecast coming true.  
He sees us at Apollo Bundar; and we shoot!

*Salam-valekum, Ganga Sahib! jai hind!  
Faster than wind, khuda manind  
your trusted driver - "Al-ha Bind!*

---

<sup>2</sup> There is some evidence for this in the New York Times, who wrote about one Parsee couple in America, with the headline "PARSEE COUPLE HERE WITH OLD CUSTOMS" (July 31, 1910) They mentioned that a Mr. and Mrs. Patel, presumably on their honey-moon, expresses their fancy for the American Stock Exchange. Not that Marwari brethren were not given to a spot of rain-gambling, but we try and restrict it to the monsoon season. The writer referred to the Sari-wearing wife of this cotton-broker from Bombay as "a high-type of East Indian beauty".

Bind, an honest bread-earner. Not componental in the Mercedes of a rich Assamese. Ornamental Crank-shaft, carburetor, steering, not a spare part in some abstract machine, driving is an art! With our Jodhpuri steed Badal (loyal and fierce), the Konkani Muslim is under that piercing gaze of a God with no form, no figures – hence Astrology is outlawed in his universal sense All things happen by the Will of one supremo, How can stars, planets, the sun, in the scheme of Our religion, play any role over man's destiny? From Moses to Confucius, and Plato to Pliny, Religion prescribes a code of letters, tablets That describe calendars for life<sup>3</sup>, templates Astrology is prohibited in the Qu'raan Alha Bind is a God fearing Mussalman, *Raftaar-e-Bombai, Rustom-e-Hind!* *Faster than wind is Alha Bind!*

GANGZ

*Jyotishi T, I Y A M, there is no problem Triyambak, we had foreseen them*  
Bind is unaware, innocent of God's plan That in the near future, a seed of deep dissent A conflict<sup>4</sup> between master and servant, Lines will surface - between One All-mightee Versus Hindu crores, to be precise, thirty three. We don't know the fixed Time, circa 1910, Evening light, a crowd is entering the din-din At Yacht Club, Apollo Bunder, for dinner and social games; Al-ha looks much thinner, than we last saw him, he asks, "Do you think it might rain tonight?" as he dusts. We Blink when sometimes he conducts, a test of skills being forbidden by faith, from jyotishi's ills Has Bind fallen in the company of a Marwari? Our clansmen - a gambling platoon, in Wadi Bundar have stalls, collecting in the monsoon And betting on the rain. Tikamchand Khemji From Ran-goon, the moneylender of Kalbadevi In Bind's new quips, his tune is heavy Not given to lying, howling Bind spills all

### Stealing Time

BIND

"Yes, Panditji, yes. We have been to the stall!! You see, there was a puncture in his car – he took us there, we waited outside the bazaar

<sup>3</sup> See *India through its Calendars* in *The Argumentative Indian*, by Amartya Sen.

<sup>4</sup> The origins of this difference are traced to the mathematics of ancient Vedic philosophers like Aryabhata (father of *shoonya*, the zero) and Islamic thinkers like Al-Khwarizmi (father of algorithm, the recursive program).

at one juncture, To collect the fare, Saar we had to go inside, there were stalls thirty Hundreds of Marwadis engaging in this dirty, Dubious form of *chori*, with Calcutta moris<sup>5</sup>. *Tap tap tap tapori, seena jori!!!sena jori!!* When Khemji slipped in the mud, shouting in a *bole* strange, "Thud!" we approached him, he asked for change We did not notice cheating, but the miser Placed a bet on our behalf. Not wiser Lured by the luck of winning the wager To buy ourselves a motor-gari! Racer! We lost our last *pai-pai!* Noor Ali Khan Our uncle, the old attar-wallah, had warned He gave much *salah*<sup>6</sup>, we still got conned!" *Tap tap tap tapori, seena jori!!!sena jori!!*

GANGZ

"Alah Bind," we tell him, "Don't be exasperated". Our breath abated, since we would not employ His services in the coming month, remain coy. Bind continued,

BIND

"And rain-gambling<sup>7</sup> is the not the only thing Khemji has down to a science. We followed him in town. One day we reached the Colaba Observatory the clerk who sells gauges, clocks, inventory was whispering with him." We heard the story,

GANGZ

"Bind, in your desire to avenge the loss, you are inspired by this *kahani*, because –

BIND!!!

"Guruji, those two are planning a *karastani*, right under the nose of your Mr. Moos!."

GANGZ

"What is it that you deduce?" we ask Alha –

<sup>5</sup> Rain gauges.

<sup>6</sup> advice

<sup>7</sup> Anne Hardgrove writes: "Rain gambling was defined as a monsoon event, when bets were placed on the amount of rain that would fall within a three-hour period, a period of time known in Hindi as *pahar*. In order to calculate the precise quantity amount of rain that had fallen, a tank was fitted with a spout from which rainwater would overflow once a certain quantity had fallen." No contest, no race, you'd agree; it was only a shot at the future, on how a contingent event would ultimately shape up. In Hindi, this was *'barsat ka satta.'*

BIND.

“What can they steal, a flask?  
A Meter?” Neither...” he says, “The crime  
“ is obvious, they are planning to steal Time.”  
*Tap tap tap tapori, seena jori!!!seena jori!!*  
*Mori seh ghamoree, ghanthey ki chora-chori*  
*Ek Lori, Ek Bori, poori paltan gori*  
*Tap tap tap tapori, seena jori!!!seena jori!!*

GANGZ

Bind is right, For a Marwari Time’s a synonym  
for money. We remember Peetall & Allen,  
Bind-*jubani* is reminiscent of that incident.  
In 1861 - the two said operators were bribed  
to publish one telegram saying it had arrived  
from an O’Brien. The Electric Telegraph Office  
put it on the notice board, with his signature. This  
caused a pandemonium in the price of Opium,  
The Chinese signals were hijacked, went the report<sup>8</sup>.  
Mr. Crawford of the Fort Police Court  
charged ten signalers, 18 months of prison,  
this led to a complete revision. Goings-on  
at the observatory are certainly suspicious.

#### Count Koenigsmarck Takes A Lift

GANGZ

A nudge for Professor Moos, on this auspicious  
Evening, with guests like Thakore Kanti Singh,  
He was giving the lecture. During the sighting  
of Halley’s Comet. N. Ardeshir Framji Moos,  
teaches physics at Elphinstone College. He goes  
about his duties in an orderly fashion, caution -  
sending charts and tables and gazettes,  
of the measurements, as far as the cable exports  
To Greenwich, to New York, the farthest seaports  
in Africa. They would compare the effects,  
pen-pals for twenty years, Ardeshir Moos aynd  
John Grigg, the comet-hunter of New Zealand.  
“Where to, Sahib?” Bind says as a young fellow  
approaches. European, his face gone yellow  
in his late twenties, his moustache curved low.  
Small, erect frame, wrapped in a tuxedo,  
a top-hat, thin jaw and a monocle.

*The Gurman spoke in accent very urban*  
*There is Garmy in Garmany, rainy season*

<sup>8</sup> The Bombay Times & Standard had reported thus: *35 telegrams from Galle had been falsified about the same date, and that advice about opium from China had been surreptitiously drawn from the wires while in transmission, by cutting the line on the Bombay side of Satara, and reading the messages off upon an instrument taken to the spot for that purpose.*

COUNT

“Where eez thiz Viktoria headed?” was his query.

GANGZ

We replied, in his own tongue, “Die Obzervatorie,”

*(How is Gangz speaking German? Explain the Bombil Boulangerie Machine, daughter of Babel.)*

COUNT

“Could we share the ride, then?” he said. “Be my guest,” on which he remarked, “Great vehikle!  
Very kind of you, I partikularly like the cycle  
Of the horze’s trot. Even the Governor’s Regia  
would pale in komparison.” He said, “In all Asia  
there is no steed that can outrun Badal.” Flattery!

#### On The Public Transport of Bombay

GANGZ

The West uses it in abundance, to refill the battery  
Which powers the wheels of society. Alha tugged  
The reigns, “Chal, Badal...tut-tut...cha!” The coach  
was moving at a brisk pace, towards the far approach  
Red, sandy soil, the extreme southern end, degree  
18°53’45”N, 72°48’56”E, 32 feet above the sea.  
Spraying water on the road, was a poor *bishti*,  
The Gurman companion was perplexed – cooing

COUNT

“What exaktly does that man think he’s doing?”

GANGZ

“In Bombay, you see - water on the road keeps  
the dust from flying into people’s faces. Sleeps  
Like a man after a nice head massage, *champi*  
at the local barbershop, no one grumpy, uncouth  
the traffic of the brain flows smooth.” Primitive!  
he said.

COUNT

“I have had the pleasure of discussing  
this matter with Sir Vithaldas Thackersey<sup>9</sup> - he ees  
chairman of the kouncil, Justice of the Peace.”

GANGZ

“Dear Count,” we said, “not all your entourage  
can use Hemtaj’s ayurvedic oil for their massage,  
(perfumed), and must do with water, coconut oil,  
petroleum is only the privilege of hoi-polloil  
the few people who own the motors in Bom-bay

<sup>9</sup> A biography of Thackersey states that: “...the use of water, its rush, the force of its ejection from the hose broke up the surface of the roads, dislodged the sand and stones, drifted the debris into drains and choked them up.”

one thousand or so in total, on-lay. Common folk, use their feet or horse-driven tramcars bullock-recklas,.

COUNT

In October 1903, Municipal Corporation by spraying petroleum on the road, experimentation from Apollo Bunder to Crawford Market, to evade frequent watering and repairs. The road was made compact, but Sir Vithaldas withdrew the commission.

GANGZ

Because price of oil was a staggering Rs 35 per tonne!"

COUNT

"I did not mean to offend you", said the esquire.

GANGZ

"The conquered are not easily offended, Sire - " we told that man. Besides the municipal *afi-sars*, industrialists, and servants of the Crown, professors few people have telephones. Overhead in the sky electric cables hang, the tramway they will electrify Taxi cabs are in demand. An engine of steam Bombay makes people, an industrial machine. We have been Offended, indeed! For 300 year! The electric light of Thomas Edison, and his peer Mr. Nikola Tesla have produced a kind of force Mightier than the Empire, it walks through doors! Count Hans Von Koenigsmarck, blue blood!

*Jantar Mantar, hath pakad, pabooji ki phad!!*  
*Jantar Mantar, hath pakad, pabooji ki phad!!*  
*There is Garmy in Garmany, rainy is season*  
*tu Pabooji ki Phad, the season is pat-jhad!*

After shaking his hand; we study a smirk, a smile a moderate and comfortable life, like a reptile but darkness in the future, the Black Hole of Calcutta, cruelty Indian-style. *Tolamatol* since 200 years, the ghosts – flowing, spreading. He inquired our occupation, we answered dreading "Promise not to inquire about your future, Count - We are all astrologers, or tantamount"

COUNT

"I promise," he said, "I did some I Ching myself! (sigh) According to Chinese Zen, when Earth eats water to produce metal in a hearth, or a furnace, Metal eats wood to produce water in steam engines, in a triangle obtuse To complete the cyclic flow of elements, water eats fire to generate wood in a plant, wood eats earth to generate fire when burnt. Soon petrol (a kind of wood) will be used

to produce fire, and water from air produced. When this petrol runs out, fuel will be made from water, and the roads will be laid - (since the *vahana* of tomorrow<sup>10</sup>, today is the fuel) from petroleum, *peela* sticks. Cars will fly, you'll –

**It's a Folk Song**

GANGZ

(HAHAHA!)

We started laughing at his strange conjecture, "You are coming for the comet or giving lecture?" We asked him. "Er...the comet?" he had no idea "Today is not just May 18 – it is the 76<sup>th</sup> year since Halley's comet was last here. In 15 minutes, you will be able to see it sail by."

COUNT

"Astranummy is not my business, Mr. Trumbuch. Time is munny.." Stellar events don't interest me, Parsi ladies do But why is it, you must tell us - Water-sellers coo on the railway platforms, shouting "pani, pani!" naked arms reaching out of the windows, many with empty cups." He hiccups! He hiccups?

GANGZ

Want some paani? Paani? There is nothing wrong It's a folk song! Enjoy the staff-officer's quota! *Jantar Mantar, hath pakad, pabooji ki phad!!*  
*Jo nahin khaate khaana, sahib, gaate hai woh gaana*  
*Andher nagari, Andheri, raja kaana, gufa kanheri*

COUNT

Reminds me of Holwell, the prisoner of Kolkota In 1756 at the Fort William, the Nawab of Bengal" -

GANGZ

His story was *bogus*, of course, for the benefit of all

<sup>10</sup> When plastic bags were recently banned in modern Bombay, many heaved a sigh of relief. No more would holy, dead cows turn up stuffed with the damned polymer as if there were rogue taxidermists about. Finally, the mountains of rotting waste would begin to fade away, the stench would go. For the Chief Engineer of the municipality it raised another significant problem – how would he fill up the belly of the hungry road! With roughly 951 roads<sup>10</sup> have been marked as severely damaged by the rains this monsoon. Due to the lack of freely available plastic waste, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation is now going ahead without the plastic fillings in the earth's cavities, at the risk of reducing the road's pucca-ness. Mid Day reports that "...plastic bags were being used for asphaltting roads, as mixing plastic with the asphalt protects it from the rainwater and prevents potholes".

On our trip to America, Newspapers in the West  
were currently taken up with a strange inquest.  
The New York Times had written of a treasure-chest  
in the Orient containing the Buddha's ashes<sup>11</sup>.  
The humble Count was certainly a hunter.  
Gases & garms we see in Germany,  
Na-ji not in Count's palm<sup>12</sup>, -  
A Nazi hand we had read, in Amsterdam.  
*Gao Bind Gao, sahib ko katha sunaao!*

BIND

*Faster than wind, khuda manind*  
These are echoes in Time's flow, not contrived  
When Governor Charles Boone had arrived  
Bombay was sitting like a "duck on a marsh",  
"visited" freely by the Sarkhel, his enemy-arch,  
The Maratha navy's admiral was - Kanhoji Angria.  
Boone implemented an old design of Gerald Aungier  
Fortification! They built walls from Dongri-a, joined  
from north to the southern end at Mendham's Point.  
The public started calling it *Kala Killa*,  
the black fort – its appearance, la hall villa! Hain?!  
*Count Kee nazarein tedhi! There goes one lady!*

COUNT

"Coveted Lady! There goes my hostess, a kind one  
*Count Koenigsmarck! She says* The wife of General  
Bindon Lady Blood was driving her dog-cart, she  
waved to him as she overtook the Victoria.

GANGZ

She'd caved  
When we read her palm once, but she did not return  
for a second reading. Instead, for a second opinion,  
she had settled.

### Reception By Professor Moos

Professor N. A. F. Moos, The Director's O-fees  
was waiting for the visitors. Fifty attendees,  
Among the British gentry, it was a hobby  
to watch comets over scotch. The lobby  
was crowded, there seemed to be a queue –

<sup>11</sup> A headline from April 10, 1910 reads: **HAVE BUDDHA'S ASHES BEEN FOUND AT LAST?** In this they wrote of Gautama's Buddhism "the faith which at one time numbered in all probability more followers than any other form of religious belief". This claim can be easily disputed, since Hindu Gods outnumbered the Hindus at one point in history.

<sup>12</sup> Gerhard Boldt, a junior *Wehrmacht* officer assigned to prepare war maps in Hitler's Berlin headquarters would describe his hands thus in April 1945, after shaking them: "...his left arm hangs slackly, and his hand trembles a good deal."

MOOS

"There is no need for that, Pandit-ji, not for you..."  
came a voice from the stairway, it was Mr. Moos.  
"Excuse me everyone! Gangz! You raving recluse!"  
"Where have you been, you tantric on-da-loose?!"  
"Professor Moos, allow me to..." ventured the Count.  
He told him, "You can join the guests, Sir – amount  
Is two rupees. Hurry, only a few moments remains  
in the passage." To his new secreturry, he explains  
"Margaret, join the guests now – you too  
I'll lock the office on my way out. Adieu!"

GANGZ

"Goodnight, Professor. Count? -" Marge mumbled,  
then started out the lobby door, Count stumbled  
in tow. We follow the Director up the stairs  
to the second floor. We reach a large hall, chairs -  
with instruments on every wall; a telescope  
at the balcony, with a tray of drinks!

MOOS

"I hope  
Gangz.." said Moos; as he watched Margaret  
walk the Count-down, Towards the garden below  
"...it is best that your encounter with that fellow  
remains unofficial. We accept the glass of scotch,

*Jantar Mantar pee sikander,  
is chhotey pyaaley ke under,  
rasamrut ko kheench, fultoo  
tully hona maangta apunkoo*

GANGZ (drunk)

The hands..." "The hic! Dish-creation  
We appreciate the whiskification..."

MOOS

2.28  
"Triyambak,  
hang on, lets put on some Sebastian Bach!  
Um, I left almost a year ago, and have been busy  
in the service of Her Highness, with Singh-ji."

NARRATOR

Moos had kept a steady correspondence  
in matters of astronomy with Thakur Kanti  
in Jeypore. At Jantar Mantar, there was less *ashanti*  
the instruments were made in stone; less prone  
to error, metal is ductile to temperature.

MOOS

"You made a caricature of the Black Hole?"  
asked Moos, our friend.

GANGZ (drunk)

“That’s our patti-pole,  
Moos-ji. Two-three observations in the same  
Direktion, we took. Terrible sight, a deadly game,  
fogged by guss - ” we said. “After the Caucus  
against Sir Phirozshah Mehta, things are wurrrs.”

MOOS

You must focurrs, Gangz, destroy this curse  
after reading. From Jeypore - ” He push uss...

GANGZ (focusing)

a thick envelope bound in string towards us;  
it has the royal insignia of the dynasty Amber  
- the sun.

MOOS

“John Grigg says he’s going to capture  
a picture of the thing. You keep waiting years!  
You’re too slow with *soumras*, Ganga. Cheers!”  
(sigh) The report from Jeypore is conclusive,  
Our original investigations into the elusive  
Heuronymous machines have been a success,  
we can create machines by thinking, the Princess  
had congratulated us. By staring at their diagrams,  
we could create new instruments of the sky!

GANGZ (sad, reading)

Since this high finding, Jeypore’s patronage  
for astronomy was withdrawn. The first page  
says, “for thinking, there is no resistance  
why would you need financial assistance  
henceforth, the fellowship is being cut.”  
A disastrous piece of news, *ghor sankat*<sup>13</sup>.

NARRATOR

Initially, the telescope is pointed towards  
the main road, where the kind Director’s  
guests had parked. One motor whirrs  
exits too early.

GANGZ (crying)

Our fast-friend swivels the tube  
We drain our glass. He quickly<sup>14</sup> refills the lube (x3)  
with more nectar. “If you don’t mind I take a seat  
here,” he says, pointing to the balcony, “Sweet  
young ladies are leaving with Koenigsmarck!”

MOOS

“Once in a lifetime, Gangz, here comes the spark!...”,  
Of Halley in the night sky, a ball of fire, an arc!

falling not rising like meteors, a spear  
the ball-point pen of God, leaving a tear  
of its might in the fabric of space. Kanti Singh  
is now on the stage, speaking and singing –

KANTI SINGH (singsong mantras)

“The Hindu idea of time, hm, consider a legend  
the world as a machine-clock, no start or end  
*While traveling through forest, Narada asks Lord  
Vishnu about maya, the illusory world.  
After a while Vishnu feels thirsty and sends Narada  
to a nearby village to fetch him some water-a,  
where Narada falls in love with a farmer’s  
daughter and sets up a household. Summers  
and winters pass, he lives happily  
with his new family for many years,  
before a terrible flood wipes out the village  
and he finds himself wandering, after the pillage  
through the forest again. Upon hearing his footsteps,  
Vishnu says, “O Narada, where have you been? My  
lips Are parched, I have been waiting for half an  
hour. This Hindu myth divides Time into two portals  
–that of gods (sacred time), that of mortals  
(profane time). Maya manifests through cyclical  
Kalachakra, since time dilates from clerical  
human being to gubernatorial gods, different  
for us, smaller durations of cycles, itinerant  
wheels within larger wheels. The mantra, the saga  
are an invocation of sacred time, a bridge of raga  
that connects the smaller clock to its container,  
a journey that periodically relieves saint-sinner  
from the Now<sup>15</sup>, time that is material.  
Man’s soul takes new bodies, clothes, discards  
through different incarnations, no death, nothing  
urgent.*

KANTI (advertisement-like)

How could any Hindu household generate  
Such a waste of detergent?! No Sir, we clean  
our clothes in God’s washing machine! As above,  
thus below!!!” Kanti Singh points out the arc  
of Halley, and says: “That comet is a spark  
from what celestial plug?! In which machine  
do sparks propel the gases? A four-stroke  
combustion engine comes to mind.

KANTI (sings)

Notice how these ages grind, break down  
into four key *yugas*<sup>16</sup> which correspond  
with geometric figures and their bond.”

<sup>13</sup> The “deepness of trouble” is expressed here, in emotive  
Hindi.

<sup>14</sup> *The origin of the Indian coinage “fast friends” is thus  
revealed – Dr. Fear*

<sup>15</sup> *hal* in Arabic

GANGZ!!! (drunk and loud)  
 The hour had arrived when we must write -  
 A book of our findings, or face eternal damnation  
 that awaits an astrologer too far ahead,  
 shunned by his own time, deemed a failure.  
 Tonight, with the help of our Heuronymous  
 machine. Calmly we sit, alight  
 Obtaining a clean sheet from Moos's draper,  
 keeping the spirits flowing, (glug) we think at the  
 paper  
 The book will write itself. There is no other way  
 in which a solution would appear, we must pray  
 But first, we had to destroy the report  
 so that no minor seers could receive our transport  
 of the manuscript before one hundred years...

NARRATOR

Moos has gone down into the garden to entertain  
 his guests before they start missing him. Certain  
 that he is within hearing distance, sipping the port,  
 of the Governor. We place the dossier on the table  
 and draw a *yantra* on top of it with a stencil. You see  
 – burning a manuscript will not guarantee  
 its destruction alone. It must be given, respect  
 to the Elements with gifts hidden, lest they suspect  
 treachery.

GANGZ (mad)

*Burn! Burn! Do not return! Bhoo-Bhasm!*  
*Jantar Mantar – Jaal Tu Jalal Too*  
*Aee bala ko Taal Too, Faltoo, Faltoo*  
*Rabadabadub Rapchick Rapchick*  
*Yeh bajrang baan jo jaapey*  
*Taate bhoot prêt sab kaanpey*  
*Yeh bajrang baan jehi mare*  
*Taahi kaho phir kaun ubaarey*

NARRATOR

The audience in the garden, could not see a *rasm*  
 a ritual Koli dance visible from the balcony;  
 with the arrival of the comet, in the village.  
 Uncanny! The fishermen-priests in long cloaks  
 hold candles, one each. Twenty of them blokes  
 moving to the beat of song and drum, they hum  
 A large square drawn into the sand, edges -  
 marked with masts taken off abandoned boats.  
 They protect a sacred flame, moving their hands  
 In a strict pattern, so that the flame first expands  
 through the priests, and then all but one flame  
 extinguished by the sea breeze, resumes the game  
 through the network again. The walking of monks  
 in this de-rave is a set of instructions, seeds, anks  
 the waning and waxing has achieved a saw-seas.  
 The flame grows, more powerful than the breeze,  
 a child dressed up as a fish streaks diagonally  
 through the square, blowing each out orally

in his path, as the chanting reaches a crescendo.

GANGZ (raving mad)

The Hour of The Bombil is impendo,  
 the fish that Rama threw from Kanyakumari  
 into the Bay Of Bombay. The arrogant machari  
 had its spine broken for refusing to help Rama  
 build the bridge that would take him into Ravana's  
 Lanka, and went into history as the only creature  
 of the sea with the Galle to do so. Some wonder  
 why benevolent Rama would do a thing so cruel?  
 While all the creatures fishy came in plural  
 to help Rama, they were without a specie  
 that could translate for all, the nefarious  
 Bombil was given the job, it suffered -  
 the arch of *harpodon nehereus* was broken  
 Into a boat upside down, carried by fishermen  
 A torch in its cavity, along the beach.  
 A fish walking, in a light so dim

GANGZ (singing mad) (music drums)  
 bumello-bumbelo-bombil bellowbim – (x5)

MOOS

"Gangz – that's no use anymore," said Moos,  
 entering the room. "What are you doing?!"

GANGZ

We were trying to use  
 our mind to project into the astral sphere,  
 the needle eye.

MOOS

"The centre has shifted from here,"  
 said Moos. "The effects of the urban voltage  
 have upset the magnetic readings, outrage!  
 to an extent that a separate annex-ture  
 of the observatory in 19-zero-chaar,  
 Your journey is longer than expected, the clock  
 now depends on the readings from Alibaug,  
 without which none of its own observations  
 would make any sense. But what happened to  
 that book you were writing?"

GANGZ

It is written, and it has been sent to a future man.  
 The Chinese would have seen it shift, in the Sign  
 of The Tortoise; the flow of design, its poise  
 and power sifting like sand, defying  
 the fingers of Empire rarefying.

(VERY SLOWLY, EACH WORD)

Not in your hands,  
 Not-ice, brave reader, the book that stands  
 the burning has begun, that book on your shelf  
 (the top shelf, in your shelf)  
 When it is closed, it writes itself. (END)