

Poems by M. Ali Lakhani

Aaron's Rod

Out of thin air you produce a white dove
As your cane collapses into your glove.
There is a secret to your sleight of hand
The marveling audience cannot understand.

How curious the mind is to find things out!
But what room is there for wonder without doubt?
Could we eliminate the unforeseen
By knowing the workings of the machine?

Beyond all mechanisms is the mind,
Whose alchemical source we seek to find.
But here, the magic is within our selves,
Within the spirit that, enchanted, delves.

When Aaron and the sorcerers competed,
The conjurers of Pharaoh were defeated.
Though they too could perform tricks, the great God
Swallowed up their serpents through Aaron's rod.

Our heart is that rod, a devouring force,
The intimate mystery that is our source,
Not the Pharaonic heart that will harden,
But like Adam's, enchanted, in the Garden.

Crucifixion

Here, through flesh and sinews and bone
The cruel nails were driven in,
By fists of iron, hearts of stone,
As firm as faith, as deep as sin.

The burnished timber's splintered stain
Bore witness to his voiceless screams,
The metal agony of his pain,
His anguished gasps, his fevered dreams.

Not heard by those who played at dice
The final prayer of his breath,
Nor by the mute uncaring skies
That gazed upon this scene of death.

But only he whose spirit rose
Received his prayer, redeemed his loss,
His only comforter at the close—
His neighbor dying on the Cross.

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The Tree of Life

For Barry McDonald

There is a tree that in us grows
Out of a deeply planted seed,
Whose blossoms the heart alone knows,
Whose inner sap our desires feed.

Its roots are planted in the skies,
Its trunk encircling space and air,
Its canopy vast within us lies,
Generous as mercy, and as fair.

Though that tree is our very essence,
We think our sapling self exists,
Blind to its arboreal presence,
The leafy grace by which all subsists.

How Flowers Open

Some view 'I' and 'Thou' as units of force
All in oppositional intercourse,
But 'I' am not the subject who conceives,
Rather the inwardness the heart receives.
There is no other but the Presence inside.
It is but from our own Beauty we hide.
All in each, and each in All, is contained:
This truth must be realized, not explained.
When water descends, to where does it flow?
And when it becomes ether, where does it go?
There is an outpouring from the heart of things
That transcends our meager diminishings.
This is how into otherness we bleed,
How each life's flower opens from one seed.

The Burden of Beauty

Because the burden of beauty is love,
The sky above us, with its changing hues,
Is wide and open. Winged creatures know this,
Who have ascended and looked down on us,
But also those who have gazed at the stars
Or seen them shimmer on the ocean's face.
We who would devour distance with thirst
Are not content to let emptiness bleed
In us, and so we wound those around us
Instead of opening into their hearts.
The angels look down on us with pity
And weep that our souls do not understand
Why the sky, though distant, kisses the earth
And the vanishing sun always returns.

The Angelus

Ink fades, paper yellows,
Yet the unwritten Word

Proclaims the Angelus
Of a meaning unheard

Except within the heart
Of each emptying soul—

A self-effacing art
Illumining the Whole.