

NAVAKANTA BARUA MEASUREMENTS

*It is evening now,
Lets go to the tailor's to get measured.
Measurement of neck, chest, hands and arms
Measurement of the thumb.
We shall give measurement of the palm and the heart,
The entrails, the spleen and the liver,
Give count of hormones and love.
Let us give measurements of life
Of this and that and various things.
Only give measurements.
We shall think of the stitching later on.
For the time being lets just give measurements.
We can only give measurements;
We can only take reckonings.
We shall record that suicides have swelled considerably.
We shall give count of the letters in a speech
Give count of the Christians in Arabia.
Just give measurements.
We shall think of the stitching later on.
Only think.
Someone after us will measure anew
Saying that our measurements were all wrong.
Fresh new measurements.
When will someone stitch the garment to fit Man?*

Translated from Assamese by D.N.Bezbaruah
Dancing Earth, An Anthology of Poetry from North-East India, 2009

KARISHMA D'SOUZA BRIDGES: CROSSING OVER

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Karishma D'souza is a young painter and printmaker who belongs to the new generation of Indian artists. She moved to the city of Baroda, in the state of Gujarat, to study printmaking at the Faculty of Fine Arts, at M.S University. Baroda felt like an artistic homecoming for her. The Faculty of Fine Arts is in touch with Indian folk art traditions through workshops and visiting artists, and has an extensive archive of images from the history of the schools of painting of North India.

Gujarat is one of the most industrialized states in the country, and Baroda has residential areas interspersed with industrial sectors. The paintings begin as documentations of specific places and people, filtered through poetry which foregrounds a common humanity – consistently through the oral poetry of the 15th century weaver-poet Kabir of Benares, who spoke from the midst of society, from the marketplace and the road. The poet addressed divisive thinking, stitching and joining through warnings and reminders.

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*The sitting one is a shopkeeper
The standing one herds cows,
The wakeful one is a watchman.
Death grabbed and ate them all*

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*Saints, once you wake up, don't doze off.
Time can't eat you, eons can't swallow you,
Age and decay can't waste you.*

The imagery in the paintings moves from memory to objects – signs of preciousness in life – love, understanding, knowledge, growth – where light is a reference to an excerpt from the poem 'An October Morning', by Jayanta Mahapatra: *'..as a web of light is flung across those dim places of the body where we hate to hide again.'*²

1. The Bijak of Kabir, translated by Linda Hess and Sukhdev Singh, 1983.

2. The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry, edited by Vinay Dharwadker and A.K. Ramanujan, 1998.