



KINNARI VEENA

Now an old, stringed instrument.
An item in the gallery of antique
musical instruments in the local museum.
Once patiently, anonymously crafted, assembled
by obscure artisans using things as simple
as iron strings, a resonator made of
gourd and wood, pegs on the curved headstock
for winding the strings,
narrow frets mounted on the long elegant neck,
and an ivory bridge
stuck on the crown of the resonator
to keep the frets and strings apart for
the birthing of great raga-s.
Perhaps a divine Kinnari sat by it
or sat cradling the veena on her lap,
her immemorial fingers hurting the strings
to sing into living being
ancient rapture, mystery, pain and joy--
songs only women and men in love
sing through every pore,
the stars and darkness and rain naturally sing--
songs so deep that the seven Loka-s
shudder on the edge and peacocks
dance as if rain has come drowning
the shores of time and space.....

SUPPLICANT

Twenty-three centuries ago
Devadatta inscribed his longing
for the temple dancer Sutanika
in three lines of verse
inside the Jogimara cave in Ramgarh hill.
He was indeed a suppliant
And driven by dreams of spring.
I am a decrepit wraith.
I am a suppliant too,
chased by darkling memory.
The centuries spurring me,
I am not content only to inscribe.
Therefore, I invoke
the invincible shimool blossoms
and festive exultant calls of the cuckoo
hoisting fugitive spring every year
in the delinquent city and murmur--
coax me away from streets shapes objects into
spring sphere, coax me away from memories
into dream, coax me away from amorphous
urban bubble into sailing spring.

Bionote:



Subhransu Maitra is a familiar figure as a translator of Bengali classic fiction and verse into English. He has also emerged into view as a poet who has published two books of verse, namely, *When My Mother Sang* and *The Dark Harvest* with a third one coming soon.