

My Mother's Mother

Eighteen-eighty-nine, the Sind;
sun and sand,
silver, silk and spice,
couscous and camel dung,
The lap of the ayah
full beneath my mother's mother.

Porcelain-pale lilies of the Raj.
Rouge the cheek, memsahibs,
glove the hand,
fan my mother's mother's memoirs.

Beatrice, remember redemption's test?
(Father, Son and Holy Ghost.)
The quest to quench your questions.

Nineteen-twenty-six, the vows;
seclusion's years,
monastic silence, meditation.
Remember, Mamaji, the recitation?
One hundred and eight Upanishads.

Nineteen-thirty-one, conversion;
Bhagavad-Gita to Quran.
Purdah's veil of piety
prepares you for poverty, prayer and peace.

Yes, my mother's mother, reminisce
before dust from age's veil
peppers your mind
and the mynah's warble wavers
with your final confession of faith.