

VINOD KUMAR SHUKLA

## Four Poems

Translated from the Hindi by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra

### **'A street in the bazaar'**

A street in the bazaar,  
A busy shopper,  
Carrying a soiled  
Slightly torn bag  
In each hand,  
One empty, one full.  
Inside it, potatoes, leafy  
Vegetables, a small packet  
Of garam masala, and chillies,  
Red or green.  
How I wish I could've been  
A ten-rupee note  
And found shelter  
In his bag.  
But I was holed up  
Inside my own.

*(1960)*

**'My numb arms are'**

My numb arms are  
Parallel with the tree's  
Dry branches  
And my eyes fixed  
On a leaf bud.

When it rains,  
I want the eyes  
To be wet first,

And after that,  
In my arms' greenery,  
A bird to make  
Its nest,  
Lay eggs.

*(1960)*

**'A small room'**

A small room  
With nails in the walls  
To hang pictures from.  
But there's not one  
Picture to be seen.  
Wherever the hand  
Can reach easily,  
Clothes hang  
Neatly from the nails,  
To be worn again  
A few more times.

**'I toss a bunch of keys'**

I toss a bunch of keys  
In the air,  
And the sky opens.  
Perhaps the key  
Of my strongbox  
Fitted it.

High up  
In the clear sky  
I see five fighter jets appear  
And disappear,  
And inside the strongbox  
One or two cockroaches  
That refuse to come out  
Even when the box is

Held upside down.

*(1965)*

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