

P. PREETHU

Twilight

The Grove 21 (2014)

On moonlit nights,
I travel in dreams, climb
Up the juniper, seeking
The tip where She is.

*Adi Shakti, Adi Shakti,
Adi Shakti, Namō Namō!*

On scorching days,
I travel awake, dig
Down to the roots,
Where she is.

She, who wasn't born,
Guillotined before oleander
And castor -sap and oil-
Could take her away.
Safe from prying hands
Which pamper and hurt,
Denuding eyes, thorns of
Love, splash of acid devouring
Raw flesh, being weighed
Against gold, pricked by vultures,
Bruised, beaten, put in flames,
Slogged, isolated, orphaned-

I seek myself, at both ends,
The truth of what I call 'I',
Stranded at twilight, I know not
Whom to trust- to bygone sun,
Or the approaching shadows.

‘Twilight’ is a poem about the identity crisis faced by an average Indian woman. Religious tradition speaks of her as Shakti (goddess) who is the primordial cosmic energy representing the divine feminine. At the same time, she has to suffer a lot of atrocities in the patriarchal society, ranging from female infanticide to death. Juniper symbolizes the journey in which selfhood is not compromised. In dreams of a glorious past, she chants the *Sakti mantra* (hymn) and invokes the goddess in the highest tip of the tree of selfhood while the cruel reality binds her to the roots.