

1.8 The Voice of Irrawaddy (2014)

Ayeyar - you know my name,
scoured deep into this ancient land. I'm God's
appointed life-giver, have multiplied
you for a million years. The shifting
gentle shoals you watch upon my placid face
belie my power, my torrent, born of glaciers,
cataracts and gorges in the northern wastes.

The sun's my oldest ally: you've seen me mirror
him
each day across the vault of sky,
between his cradle in the eastern hills - when we
have watched him glint between the trees, -
then through the glaring noon
which lends my face that unexpected blue,
until he westers, blinding gold,
behind the mountains' purple brow.

You so-called masters of the earth, you
make me laugh - your crusty
little habitations, your cities and your ports,
your vanities all built on my beneficence.
With your banks and quays you think
to tame me, with fragile bridges halter me. But
don't presume to master me, to dam me up,
or foul me with your sewers and your pesticides.
Have you forgot how easily I, in times gone by,
have changed my course, withheld
my monsoon flood, my myriad streams
which feed you on my journey to the sea?

Remember that I wasn't born for you, I have
a deeper purpose than to serve your little lives:
have you not heard me groaning in my bed?
If I do not conduct, deliver every season's snows
into the steaming sea of Andaman,
I shall have failed my function.

And then in turn you'll learn
how all dimensions of your life
evaporate within the blinking of an eye:
you'll leave behind your crumbling stupas,
golden images and echoing halls, to testify -
while resurgent forests occupy your
cultivated fields, and lease them back to
humbler animals than you.

And a million golden icons still
will countenance it all.

Mandalay - Feb 2014.