

herian 2

*the bicycle rickshaw driver tells me
it's mostly deserted now
mostly everyone in england
or canada
mostly those that aren't are trying
a country for the old and very young*

*as we approach herian
a child with a broken bicycle wheel and a stick
rolls past us
and announces to anyone he sees
that a stranger has arrived*

*there are some new houses
overseas money
oversees the construction
of new marble kotas
some have toilets
and one has a phone
no one sends telegrams anymore
no one ever comes back to stay
send money for the girls' high school
send money to relatives for weddings of daughters
new gurudwaras hospitals*

*i am vilaiithi babu
angrez in angrezi topi
hometown boy returned
the prodigal nephew
come back to reclaim
language and space*

*the old house seems
hardly a house at all
brick walls and brick divisions
on the roof a box room
ceiling collapsed
the pink of walls faded
the wood showing through blue
windows / doors
manure patties drying
against a wall*

*from the rooftop
on one side the fields
ready for harvest
on the other
the old houses
a horizon of broken bicycle wheels
hooked up as tv aerials*

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