

MUTTA ~ FREE

One morning after begging for my food—
looking down at one more meal
I hadn't worked for,
hadn't paid for,
hadn't earned.

A life of debts I could never repay
pushing in on all sides
like the weight of the sea.

I blinked,
and a
tear
fell into
my bowl.

Would it always feel like this?

Just as the moon rises up
from the bottom of the sea,
a handful of rice lifted itself
from the bottom of my bowl.

And my heart rose with it.

I wish I could tell you
how it tasted—

that first bite of food
as a free woman.

TISSA ~ THE THIRD

Why stay here
in your little
dungeon?

If you really want
to be free,
make
every
thought
a thought of freedom.

Break your chains.
Tear down the walls.

Then walk the world a free woman.

ANOTHER MUTTA ~ FREE

So this is what it feels like—
to be free.

Forever free
from playing the mortar
to my crooked husband's
crooked little pestle.

Morder

Spider

Enough.

For my mother.

For my daughter.

And for all the daughters

I might have had.

The cycle ends here.

VISAKHA ~ MANY BRANCHES

You say you're too busy.

That
there's
never
enough
time.

Take care of
whatever
you have
to take care of.

Then sit.

Be honest.

Do you
really think
you're going
to live
forever?

ABHIRUPANANDA ~
DELIGHTING IN BEAUTY

Haven't you spent enough time
comparing your hair
and your clothes
and your face
to the hair
and the faces
and the clothes
of those around you?

See the body for what it is.

Real beauty is in
the clear open light
of the nonjudgmental heart.

SUMANGALA'S MOTHER

Free.

Finally free
from having to stroke
my husband's little umbrella
until it stands up straight.

His releases came quickly—
and with lots of grunting.

Mine has taken
a little longer—
and came with
the sound
of straight bamboo
being cleanly sliced
into two even pieces.

I now know for myself
where true release
comes from,
and where it leads.

A seat at the foot of any tree.

ADDHAKASI ~
THE WEALTH OF KASI

A night with me
used to cost more
than all the land
in Kasi.

But through all
the pricing and haggling,
I somehow lost interest
in being talked about
like a field of wheat.

Unlike any crop,
I have ripened
here in the shade
of these gentle trees.

A field for no farmer.
A land that has paid for itself.

ANOTHER SAMA



After twenty-five years on the Path,
I'd experienced almost everything—
except peace.

When I was young,
my mother told me
that I would find true happiness
only in marriage.

Remembering her words all those years
later,
something in me began to tremble.

I gave myself to the trembling—
and it showed me
all the pain
this little heart
had ever known.

And how countless lives of searching
had brought me
at last
to the present moment,
which I happily married.

Can you imagine?

We've been
living together
ever since,
without
a single
argument.

MAHAPAJAPATI ~
PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN

I know you all.

I have been your mother,
your son,
your father,
your daughter.

You see me now in my final role—
kindly grandmother.

It's a fine part to go out on.

You might have heard
how it all began—
when my sister died
and I took her newborn son
to raise as my own.

People still ask,

Did you know then what he would become?

What can I say?

What mother doesn't see a Buddha in her child?

He was such a quiet boy.

The first time he reached for me.
The first time I held him while he slept.
How could I not know?

To care for all children
without exception
as though each
will someday
be the one
to show
us all
the
way
home.

This is the Path.