Bengali Market

Dear Mr. Gandhi
It was cold the day the masjid
was torn down stone by stone,
colder still at the heart of Delhi.

Ten years later entering Bengali market
I saw a street filled with bicycles,
girls with rushing hair, boys in bright caps.
I heard a voice cry

Can you describe this?
It sounded like a voice
from a city crusted with snow
to the far north of the Asian continent.

I saw him then, your grandson,
in a rusty three-wheeler
wrapped up in what wools he could muster.
Behind him in red letters

a sign: DR. GANDHI'S CLINIC.
So he said, embracing me, you've come back.
Then pointing to the clinic—
It's not that I'm sick

that gentleman gets my mail and I his.
That is why I am perched in this contraption.
I cannot stay long, it is Id-ul-Fitr.
I must greet friends in Old Delhi, wish them well.

Later he sought me out in dreams.
in a high kitchen in sharp sunlight
dressed in a khadi kurta, baggy jeans.
He touched my throat in greeting.

Listen my sweet, for half of each year,
after the carriage was set on fire
after the Gujarat killings,
I disappear into darkness.

In our country there are two million dead
and more for whom no rites were said.
No land on earth can bear this.
Rivers are crisscrossed with blood.

All day I hear the scissor bird cry
cut cut cut cut cut
It is the bird Kalidasa heard
as he stood singing of buried love.

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Now our boys and girls take
flight on rusty bicycles.
Will we be cured? I cried
And he: We have no tryst with destiny.

My hands like yours are stained
with the juice of the pomegranate.
Please don't ask for my address.
I am in and out of Bengali market.

Note: On 11 September 2002 I was in Ahmadabad to visit relief camps for the survivors of ethnic violence. In "Bengali Market" the voice of Anna Akhmatova speaking a question someone asked her echoes in my ear: "Can you describe this?" (see "Instead of a Preface" in Akhmatova's great poem Requiem*). I hear her voice, coming from the far north.*

"Where Are Human Rights . . . ?": Reading a Communiqué from Iraq

THOMAS KEENAN

> WHERE ARE HUMAN RIGHTS WHEN MORE than 200 Muslims are rotting for months in your prisons in a 4x5-meter room, without any of them finding a place even to sit down? Where are human rights when every day prisoners are tortured at the hands of drunken pagans? Where are human rights when Muslims are killed as a result of the torture of your executioners, and their bodies are thrown out in the open? ("Jaish Ansar al-Sunnah")

This is not a statement from a human rights group. It is a communiqué from the military wing of Jaish Ansar al-Sunnah (the Army of the Protectors of the Tradition) in Iraq, distributed on 4 October 2005 on a number of Arabic-language Islamist Internet forums, including *Ansar-Jehad* and the now-defunct *Al-Firdaws*, and widely recirculated in similar forums elsewhere (including the French *Al-Mourabitoune* [see Abou-Zoubayr]).[1] The Army of Ansar al-Sunnah is one of the Sunni jihadist militant groups fighting a guerrilla war not just against the United States and coalition military forces in Iraq but also against those said to be in league with them—primarily the Iraqi National Guard and Army, the police, Shiite and Kurdish militias and their offshoots, government officials at all levels, would-be employees of the government, and frequently civilians of the wrong sect or neighborhood or timing.[2]

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