

Ladies Unreserved

*We're moving around now in straight lines,
Again we've hit the road.
Yesterday, it was vegetables in Sion
Today, another load.
Rocking, Rolling
Blocking
the bathroom doors—
Not an inch on the floor.*

*We're travelling now on these rails
Together for the first time
Sharing shouts and stinks and baby's wails
Women in our prime—
Sweating, Screaming,
Letting
the skyscrapers flash by.*

*When the noise subsides to familiar sounds
And every door is blocked,
Let those sacks, our burdens on the ground
with weeds and green well stocked
be our rest tonight
our beds tonight
It's best we get some sleep tonight.*

*We're moving now, on those tracks
along a different stream—
Lying—legs spread wide and on our backs
Eyes closed in tobacco dream.
We're flying now—another space
Lying low in another place.*

*And in that restless roving train,
We have somehow let
it all come out and drain
with our bodies sweat—
breasts flattened, sarees flung
waist laid bare
And arms and legs and hair!*

*The night has not been so long
when quite out of the blue
A figure towering strong—
above—from low angle view.
Railway Police—
Just stay Where you are
You can't go far.*

*Sheathed dagger hangs from side
Pants tight on bulging crotch.
Gun in hand, legs spread wide
Young eyes that calmly watch
Lying figures on swollen sacks
Trying their best
to get some rest.*

*We've been moving now just this way
A home away from home
Years of yesterdays and today's
And along he comes and lands there
just stands there.
In Ladies Unreserved.*

Nandini Bedi