

G. S. SHARAT CHANDRA

## Ghazals

Even the name of the garden  
isn't the same—  
from the bombed oil wells  
smoke swirls in forlorn shapes  
of roses he once held.  
The moon climbs  
not into attar clouds  
but illusory hankerings  
around a minaret.  
Omar draws a circle:  
in this circle is my self, he writes,  
what has come out of the dark  
in repose isn't my body but my fears.

A stranger asks  
if the circle  
means something  
like a neutral territory.

Omar hears no ghazals in the night air,  
urchins scoop up water  
from bomb craters,  
a tattered woman tears the hem  
of her robe to kindle a fire,  
old men walk aimlessly,  
eyes like empty pita pockets.

On the street  
a priest's long beard  
hides the rifle in his hands,  
his bald head  
shining like the halved buttock  
of a newborn.

Omar's throat is dry.  
Stars blink, the wind gallops.