Dear Manjeera,

The ocean is his voice

The feisty poet walks up and down
measuring the yard of gallows
as Faiz did five decades ago.

Bhima-Koregaon ignites history.
A world of silence
is smitten into smithereens.

Poona was the capital of Chitpavans.
Once again, their last bastion
raises its ugly fangs.
The ghosts of the Peshwai lash their whips.
Nana orders,
Ghasiram the Kotwal chains humanity
with red-hot iron balls.
Spitoons are hung
to the necks of the earthly hearts.

Here, once the Mahatma
planted a mango tree,
and nudged Ambedkar
to acquiescence in a war of peace.

A lamp burns everyday
on the tree's chabutara
as the tourists come and go
in silent obeisance.
The octogenarian poet gazes on
the shadows of its branches
Swaying on the walls of the deathly yard.

A ruthless streak of terror
is unleashed outside the high stone walls.

Yerawada rises again.

The shadows of Poona's tyranny
cast across the stone walls of the nation.

Memories abound
the tracks of history.

Socrates was given a glass of hemlock.

Galileo was walked to the gallows
for mapping the skies
defying the Sun going around the earth.

Hikmet was incarcerated
for the Turkish soldiers
read his poems hidden
under their pillows in army barracks.

FAIZ faced death sentence
for he sang paens of labouring hands.

Déjà vu... Déjà vu...

Seeing the poet hand-cuffed
and walking through the gates
of an imprisoned court of law,
a dazed scribe of eminence
cried heart-broken

Tears rolling down his cheeks.

Decades have passed.

Now again, farcically enough,
history repeats itself.
His poetry smells of the soil.
In it, the oceans churn;
the whirling cyclonic
Eastern winds roar;
the thunderous Western monsoon winds
carry torrents of rains.
The collective voice speaks
through his nimble words.
His lullabies hum children
fall into dreams of future's visual frames.
His words echo
in the quiet mountains,
voluptuous forests,
recalcitrant boulders of the soil,
and the resistance of the earth
flows in tiny streams
through the crevices of the jagged
rocks of the Deccan Plateau
gathering into the mighty rivers.

It's poetry, stupid.
It's stupendous poetry.
It doesn't need weapons
to smelt break the iron heals of history.

His poetry has winged seeds
that float over to every shore
sailing on a gentle breeze of love
and embrace the earth's moisty crust.

The ocean is his voice.  (May Day, 2019)

( Please send a copy of this to Venu and Hemakka)