

## Stone-Masons, My Father, And Me

Namdeo Dhasal

*NAMDEO DHASAL (b. 1949 probably) a noted Marathi poet, grew up in Mumbai slums. He organised 'Dalit Panthers' to fight the oppression of the Dalits. His collections of poems include Golpitha and Gandubegicha. He has also been honoured with Padma Shree. His present poem 'Stone-Masons, My Father, And Me', translated from Marathi by Vinay Dharwadker, very succinctly depicts a stone mason's life - his miseries and the dexterity with which he gives shapes to stones.*



### Stone-Masons, My Father, And Me

Stone-masons give stones dreams to dream;  
I set a match to fireworks.  
They say one mustn't step into  
One's father's life:  
I do; I scratch  
his elbows,  
his armpits.

Stone-masons give stones flowers;  
I play horns and trumpet.  
I overtake the Parsi who stands  
turned to stone  
by the bodies of four women  
bent like bows.

I see my father's bloodied rump.  
In the chaos of the dark  
I smoke a cheroot  
and smoulder with memories  
till my lips get burnt.

Stone-masons inseminate stones;  
I count exhausted horses.  
I harness myself to a cart;  
I handle  
my father's corpse;  
I burn.

Stone-masons mix blood with stones;  
I carry a load of stones.  
stone-masons build  
a stone house.  
I break heads with stones.

### LET'S THINK AND DO

1. How is the life of stone-masons depicted in the poem? Describe in your own words.
2. What is the attitude of the speaker to his work? Why did he become a stone-mason?
3. Talk to the stone-masons in your locality and do a project work on them.

