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Poems by Shabnam Ashai

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Introduction

In the immeasurable infinite, an indescribable eminence is the eternal abode of immortality resting on the monumental columns of fertile imaginations in the gorgeous costume of the creative mind. Mind, the independent existence of pulsating reality resonates powerfully in the judicial vacancies of cosmos cheerfully like a rapturous whirl of an intoxicated faqir. The state of 'statelessness' surpasses the finite intellect who in reciprocity beats his chest to nullify 'breaking is making.' Creative art is that exiled rhythm that no meticulous craftsman has ever framed, claimed or even dreamed to arrest in any humdrum frontier. A craftsman at the ingress of the mighty loop along with his begging bowl is but a grain of sand or a droplet of a splash in the bottomless ocean and unpredictable desert. A silent crowd is a relevant companion of a creative writer headed by an authoritative sensitivity. Sensitivity devoid of digital senses and decorous discourses of diction, but a feeling copious with empathy. Sympathy is a brick of a craftsman that he utilizes according to his set frames, but empathy is a Godly afar lesser knows mortals. Any form of art devoid of empathy is but a framed trace of traceless treasure that de-shapes a feeling, the language of Lord. A deformed creature is a feeling held in the confines of reason supervised by a craftsman's cunning wife and drafts a man's half widow. And a formless flight is a golden bird that Yeats and Iqbal derive out of creative capabilities to make it fly over the mounts of mundanity and across the valleys of validities. It is like Blake's fawn carefree and wandering in creative mood to distort the lawns of experience.

The artist is in himself a domain of divinity, but a craftsman is a bundle wrapped in a veil. He lives in a frame and frames the observation, while as an artist is inseparability of creative expertise. He breaks, and

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takes a flight to ether, confirming his residency where nothing but the vast infinite rules. A caged soul yearns but a free one enjoys freedom of expression. Art is to evoke aesthetic splendor and frames in fragments only defame the unrecognizable famed feeling. A breeze of bliss stays heavenly only when allowed to be felt, but loses sheen when framed on the glossy skin of technicalities. Craft is an orphan or a widow that lives at the mercy of virtue, but art is a valid virtue.

Unless a creative artist dips the nib of his reed or the lashes of his brush into the gulf of Godly profundity, the narrative and texture can never touch a human heart. And anything that maintains distance from human soul can only be a literary piece or a verbal explosion or a wall hanging devoid of life. Art is a driving force that guarantees eternity but craft only showcases the configuration destined to be ruined.

A poem, a story or a sketch are the products of creative zeal and the zeal is an unfathomable gesture of unapproachable reality hard to put on the belt of reason to carry the load of techniques to corrupt a fertile mind. True narrative and proactive verse is an echo perceived by noble hearts, devoid of perception is a falsification of coinage.

The impressive collection of nazms of Dr. Shabnam Ashai is an extraordinary amalgamation of pure perceptions and experience. The distinctive style she has opted for perfectly fits this priestly class of sentimental poetry. She has put forth what she requires in an apt platform of nazms. These nazms are on one hand rich in instrumental texture and on the other luxuriously packed with the plight of the masses. The poetess is well conscious of the cosmos of which she is a part and parcel for the reason she has addressed social, emotional, devotional, and fanciful and ordeal state of her audience.

Do you know
a coinage thine
neither in imaginations,
nay in the depths of conscience
nor in any abode
a place discovered
in an easily spoiled world....

She is bold enough to register her observations to mark her presence in the field of exploring the world where solace can soothe one and all.

In annoyance, abhorrence
apprehension or
predisposition thy 'being' was filled
to kill me

I only jingle in a state of modesty

I am love.....

Her philosophy of adoration is coherent like a fountain that nurses all irrespective of any formal invitation. Her love theory is as clear as a wandering faqir whose objective correctly is to shelter the acute agonies rather than crying for personal aid.

The foundation of faith
is laid on the soil of soul.

Have you ever
reflected upon seriously....

Most of her nazms are like her innocent children, her aides, her companions and of course, her inner voice that she is carting in the recesses of her spirit.

Don't be sad
Nazm
is reflecting upon me
and me
on your anteroom
is burning like a candle....
Before composing the Nazam
my 'I'
God knows how long
was in prostration....

The nazms of Dr. Shabnam are a vivid prototype of self-seeking truth. Her diction is unpretentious like her dreams. These nazms are not loaded with poetical overtones but like morning breeze reaching to the sensitive ears. Creative abilities like the weaving of thought and lines breaks have added flavor to this collection.

Coinage¹

Do you know
a coinage thine
neither in imaginations,
nay in the depths of conscience
nor in any abode
a place discovered
in easily spoiled world

¹ The original poems are untitled. The titles provided here are the translator's own (editor). From *Katharsis*, pp. 32-34.

whirling
 and wandering in discombobulation.
 Do you know
 in a pocket of thy coinage
 ye have nay a crafty coin
 to be familiar with
 bread or accord
 in the world.
 One of thy coinages
 Is as lonely
 like you!

I am Love²

You have not taken me in
 need nay I thy home, but
 thy 'being'
 to fill it I would
 at every slice of time
 suffuse it drop by drop!
 Thy 'being' was alive with transcendency
 that neither my aroma
 nor my whirl
 you could hardly feel
 In annoyance, abhorrence
 apprehensions or
 predisposition thy 'being' was filled
 to kill me
 I only jingle in a state of modesty
 I am love.....

The only Truth³

The tears ceased nay
 to hold the pen
 thy lion's share of love cascaded
 down in tears
 to weave you
 you forget to make and wrap
 the sheet of love

² From *Katharsis*, pp. 108-110.

³ From *Katharsis*, pp. 120-22.

God too
 at the time of weaving my destiny
 forgot to put me with someone
 or to be conceded
 both the declarations!
 You nurse trepidation
 and forget to nurture love,
 In want of entwining and casing the love
 I am being sealed in the coffin
 for God's sake
 charge me nay of death
 death is the only reality
 the only reality.

Veil⁴

The shelter was denied
 to my grave
 a handful of soil do offer
 that shall cover me
 You
 though being my costume
 exposed me
 I am not Lala Arifa
 to give you company
 I advanced through the right rib
 I am your soul mate
 the one who accompanied you in the Heaven,
 affirmed not by my belief
 but by the Holy Quran
 you in distress wander
 carting the wound of thy rib
 I am not Lala Arifa
 to be sheltered by the oven
 do attend my grave
 with a handful of soil
 I shall be veiled.

Wandering Expedition⁵

⁴ From *Katharsis*, pp. 8.

⁵ From *Mann men jamī barf*, pp. 10-11.

Your hands
 were busy in warps and wefts of feudalism
 you would entangle to the extent
 of making your finger inaccessible
 to be clenched
 to learn how to move onwards little by little
 in lallation would express
 what only you could comprehend!
 Now that I hold the limb of air
 walking in the company of imaginations
 but what fell off my tongue
 is nothing but a babbled word
 still lying at anteroom of that mansion
 where the whiff of the apple orchard
 still hunts for me daily....
 where the stunning sunbeams
 still advance to evaluate me
 by passing through the balconies and archways
 in the lawn holding up a towering cypress tree
 looking forward at my probable occurrence....
 but the wandering expedition
 has stepped upon me heavily.

Mushtaque B. Barq is a novelist, author, columnist, translator, poet, and reviewer from Srinagar, Kashmir, with over two decades of experience in education, writing, and art. He writes in both English and Kashmiri, bridging the two literary cultures. He is also a TV anchor, an abstract artist, and a mentor in English.

A prolific translator, he has rendered the works of Kashmiri mystic poets Wahab Khar, Soch Kral, and Ahad Zargar into English, along with Hindi and Urdu poetry and Dr. Sohan Kaul's novel *Psychiatric Ward*. His own books include the poetry collections *Withered Petals*, *The Feeble Prison*, and *The Zephyr of Veth*, and the novel *Shades and Shadows*. He is a regular columnist for *Kashmir Images*, *Rising Kashmir*, and *Kashmir Pen*.