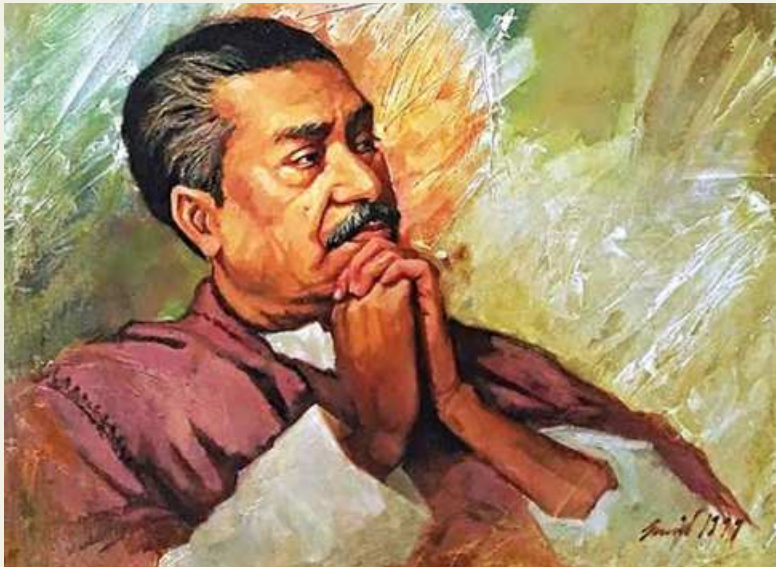


POETRY

One Ardent Map of Bangladesh*

HASAN HAFIZUR RAHAMAN
(TRANSLATED BY KAJAL BANDYOPADHYAY)



Even one individual turns into
an incomparable symbol priceless.
We all then wave it like a map.

A map and not a high-priced sapphire
which will decorate every separate ring-finger
with heavenly glamour.
That is rather lonely, exactly like the sun—
exposed to all eyes.
This map is in touch with all of us,
but we couldn't touch.
Map similar to every personal horizon,
cruelly remote but so closely placed.

This individual can be called your childhood memory.
In sorrows of billions of nights, in rocks of billions of deaths,
you will find him an irreversibly white lily
made mite by mite of sharp streams
of seventy millions of vehement rivers of blood.

Now he is free, free like a map,
yet wave him, wave, wave him as much as you want.
And every time look at the crimson colour of your heart,
grow compact in the total greenery of your watery surroundings.

He is, with his whole body sprawling, an ardent map of Bengal, including all.
He is perhaps one voice with them till death.

*Published in the *Dainik Bangla* on 10th January, 1972

The translator, Kajal Bandyopadhyay is a Bangladeshi poet, writer and academician.

Oborodh Awake!

MITALI CHAKRAVARTY

The keepers of law
The keepers of borders

What borders?
Between nations
What law?
Between stations

Army men, Policemen —
Men who will protect women

Violate, watch and rape
A twenty-one-year-old
A seventeen-year-old
A fifteen-year-old and more...

Who do we trust?
Who will protect the society from lust?
Dust unto dust
Sans wine, sans song, sans singer,
Sans justice, sans ethics, sans morals

Products of Oborodh?

What will Chitragupta write in the final analysis?

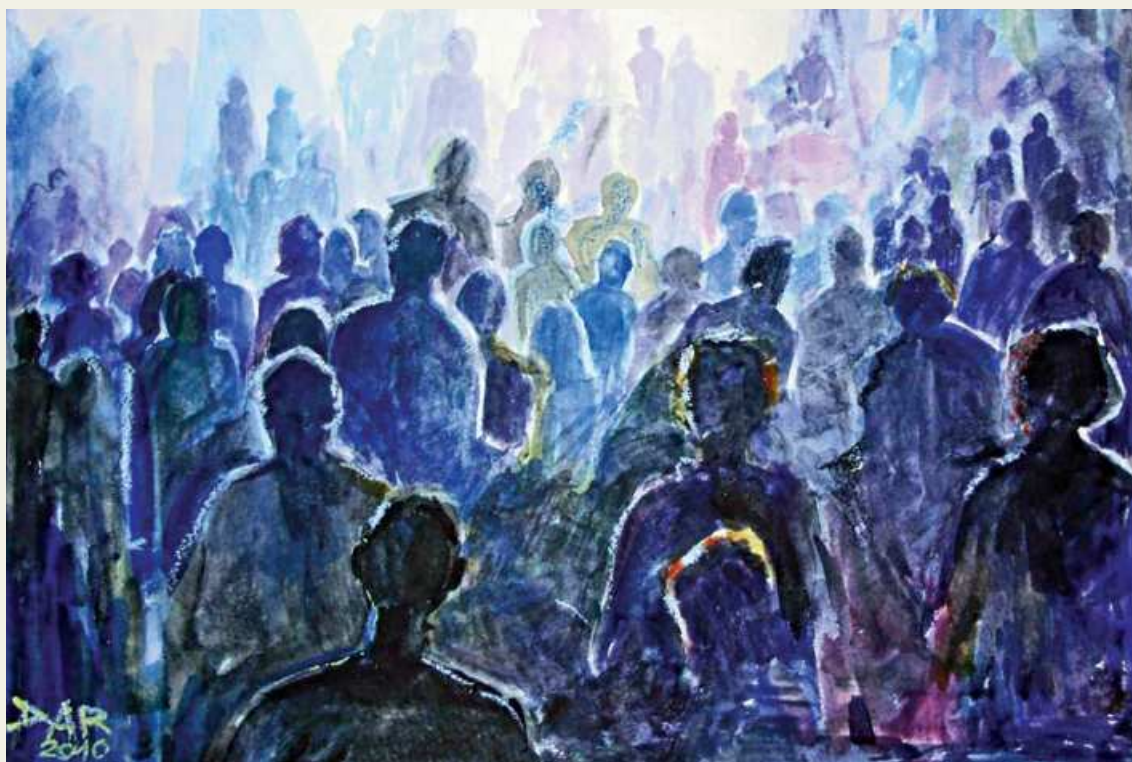
In this life, when will we learn to fight?

To Protect what is right?

When will justice become unblind,
Dance the Tandava
Till evil is reduced to rubble?

When will the Oborodh-basini Rokeya-like rise?

Mitali Chakravarty's poetry has been published online and as part of anthologies. Some of her poetry has recently been translated into German and read in a PEN International symposium.



FICTION

The Reincarnation Song

ANIK KHAN

So, I was about to slip under my bedcovers to give my back some rest and close my eyes and savour the moment till I fell asleep. Just then, I heard this tune. I stopped in my tracks to listen carefully. It had this strange hypnotic lull to it. Slowly but surely, my consciousness and the melody became one but not before I managed to Shazam it.

I woke up in my bed to find myself lying at an odd angle. I never slept in that fashion. I blamed bad dreams without thinking too much. As I walked to the bathroom and took my brush out and put toothpaste on it, I started to hum a tune. I looked myself in the mirror and as realisation dawned on me, I saw my eyes growing big. It was the same tune that I heard last night! It had been so hypnotic that I didn't remember falling asleep to it. I rushed to my bed, the toothbrush dangling from my mouth, and grabbed my phone. I remembered as much that I had used Shazam and it had given me a definite result. For those of you don't know, Shazam is a mobile app that can tell you the name of an unknown song. I opened the app and after a time of loading, there it was! The first result of my many song queries. It said:

The Reincarnation Song by Unknown Artist.
Unknown artist, huh? Could it be a very old song? Maybe that's why the database doesn't have the name of the artist.

I freshened up quickly and felt like I was possessed by a crazed maniac who had to know more about the song. Breakfast be damned, I opened my laptop and searched "The Reincarnation Song." None of the results matched what I had in mind but I still clicked the first video that came up. As it started playing, I realised that it's not the tune I was



looking for. I clicked the next video on the search results but I was disappointed. I went as far as the fourth page of the results and still couldn't find what I was looking for. I pushed my computer away but I was far from giving up. Being unable to find the song only helped to increase my curiosity tenfold. I started to think.

How come Shazam identified the song but none of the music providers have that song. This kind of stuff is very unlikely to happen. Sometimes, Shazam can identify unreleased tracks because of their ID3 tags (unique song signature) but I don't

think anybody in my neighbourhood is related to music business. I would have known if any of them were making music close enough to me for me to be able to hear it from my bedroom.

Even though I could not find the tune on the internet I still had it seared in my memory. It was playing in my head as if in a loop. Over and over again. I gave in to the urge and started humming. I started getting flashbacks to the previous night and I realised that I was exactly in the same spot from hours ago when I heard the tune for the very first time. Something strange began to happen.

The sound of hard plastic crunching shook me out my reveries. I looked out the window to locate the source of the sound and found that the banana tree that is right outside and can be seen from my window, looked somewhat different. At first, I could not put my finger on exactly what was out of place but then it hit me. The blades of a particular leaf were torn open and scrunched up in such a way that it almost resembled the shape of a face.

I totally freaked out when that face started to speak, "People don't usually pay attention to the Reincarnation Song. They are too busy to care what happens in nature. But, you my dear, you heard it. Your humming left no doubt."

I said, "What is going on? How can you speak like that? You are just a tree."

"Little man, you have yet to see many wonders of this world. For someone like you, I bet the world is just waiting to open up. I would be patient if I were you."

If I expected a tree to ever speak, I would have imagined it having an ancient voice but that tree spoke with the voice of someone who is evergreen, literally. I had so many questions. I still could not believe what I was witnessing. Words seemed to pour out of me, "What is the meaning of the song and what's it got to do with you?"

"It's the tune we play when a new offshoot is growing. It's like being reincarnated. A song for such an occasion is aptly named, won't you agree?"

"I suppose, yeah. Its super catchy too. Oh, and one more thing, do you guys use internet? I mean Apple Music doesn't have your song but Shazam can identify it. Is it

because you use a secret version of the web like the Dark Web or something?"

The banana tree laughed as if amused. It was almost quite an echo of the Reincarnation Song. "We don't use technology like you. But I can guess what made Shazam to recognise the song. Maybe another human made friends with another banana tree and instead of recording the song and putting it on the web, they just tagged a phantom song with the same beat, a song that doesn't exist, and called it "The Reincarnation Song." Maybe you should find that person. Because, you know, people like you who can listen to our song are very rare. It could be the union of a lifetime."

None of it made any sense. I started to speak again, "But Mr. Banana Tree..."

The tree was reverting back to its old shape, "It was nice knowing you, little human. Sadly, it's time for my photosynthesis. Perhaps, we will meet again."

The shape of the face was gone from the leaf blade. I had so many things left to ask. I desperately heaved a long sigh. At the end of the day, I wrote down this bizarre account of events related to the Reincarnation Song, lest I should forget it or call it a fluke of imagination.

And you, you who is reading this at this very moment, if you ever talked to a banana tree or heard the Reincarnation Song, I really need to speak to you. You can find my name and details on this page.

Anik Khan is currently a student of English literature at Khulna University. He writes poetry and short stories and also does translations of contemporary literature.