



POETRY

Three Spring Songs in Translations

BY FAKRUL ALAM

আহা, আজি এ বসন্তে এত ফুল ফুটে,
এত বাঁশি বাজে, এত পাখি গায় ॥
সখীর হৃদয় কুসুমকোমল -
কার অনাদরে আজি ঝরে যায় !
কেন কাছে আস', কেন মিছে হাস',
কাছে যে আসিত সে তো আসিতে না চায় ॥
সুখে আছে যারা সুখে থাক্ তারা,
সুখের বসন্ত সুখে হোক সারা -
দুখিনী নারীর নয়নের নীর
সুখী জনে যেন দেখিতে না পায় ।
তারা দেখেও দেখে না,
তারা বুঝেও বুঝে না,
তারা ফিরেও না চায় ॥

Aha Aji E Boshonte

By Rabindranath Tagore

On this lovely spring day
So many flowers bloom
So many birds chirp away
And so many flutes play!
The beloved's heart
Was tender as a flower
Who was so uncaring
As to let it wither?
Why did he come close
Only to fake smiles?
Once so very close
Now would rather stay away!
But let such contented ones
Contented stay
Let their spring be bliss-filled
And let them feel fulfilled!
One so cruelly happy
Won't ever detect misery
Even in a woman's watery eyes
Alas, he'll not feel her pain,
Nor show any sympathy
Or glance at the woman again!



Boshonto Batashe

By Shah Abdul Karim

In the spring breeze, my friend,
In spring's intoxicating breeze
Scents from my dearest's garden
Keep drifting towards my house.

My dearest's house's garden
Lights up with colorful flowers then
Their beautiful scents enchant me
And bee-like, my mind starts humming.

In a corner of the grove
Of my dearest's house
I hear a flute playing—
A tune totally captivating.



It's a tune so overpowering
Its sheer beauty entrances me
Till totally overcome, Abdul Karim
Keeps looking her way dotingly!

Fakrul Alam is a Bangladeshi academic, critic and translator. Currently, he is UGC Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka.

Raangie Diye Jao

By Rabindranath Tagore

Brighten up everything as you go—do—before you go away
Light up everything with your signature tunes and secret hues.
With your youthful smile and your purple tones,
With your wan tear-filled tunes too!
Let your colors touch the innermost me, impacting on all that I do
Let them light the evening lamp's wick and keep me awake at night.
Arouse me before you go away once again,
Stir my blood with the moves you make as you sway!
Just as stars awaken in the cradle of the dark night
Just as streams flow from stony caverns
Just as clouds rumble from the heart of clouds
Just as rhythms spring from the center of the universal dance
Sway me too as you go—do—before you go your way
Driving all tears and obstacles away!



FICTION

Reminiscence

AFSARA KHAN

Afreen is in the third grade. She is shy, quiet and keeps to herself. Being the shortest one in class, she has to stand in the front of the line everyday at the morning assembly. She often gets bullied by classmates for her below-average height. The fact that she's extremely skinny too doesn't help.

She always sits at the back of the class and has one or two friends she talks to, but none that she would consider a good friend. Afreen's social anxiety sometimes makes her arms and legs shake. Whenever the teacher calls out her name, her heart beats so fast she fears it might jump out through her mouth one day.

She avoids interacting with teachers and hates it when it's her turn to read something from the text book in front of her class. Even though she struggles with concentrating on what the teacher is saying, she does pretty well in school. *It's really hard to concentrate on things when you have so much going on in your head*, she thinks to herself.

In English class, sitting in a corner at the back, she looks out last night and starts thinking about last night. The teacher's voice slowly fades away and her mother's high-pitched shriek floods in.

"HOW DARE YOU TALK TO ME LIKE THAT?"

"I WILL TALK HOWEVER I WANT," her father yells back.

Oh no, not again. Why can't they just be normal? Maybe this is normal and all families are like this. Am I the one who's weird?

Going to school is a bittersweet experience for Afreen. She hates it, but doesn't want to stay at home either. She loathes having to wake up so early in the morning, getting dressed, packing bags, sitting through boring classes, getting bullied by the other kids and most of all, waiting for her mother to come pick her up after school.

She is the last one to leave school everyday; something always comes up, according to her mother. The excuses range from the housemaids leaving late, to her mother just simply falling asleep. Having to stay back all alone

in an empty school and staring at the road in hopes of her mother finally coming to pick her up is one of the worst experiences for Afreen. All the teachers and staff come up to her and ask why her mother is late and Afreen has to make up new answers everyday. Although these things bother her a lot, in order to avoid confrontation she never talks about them.

What she likes about school is that it gives her an escape, somewhere to

run off to, a place where no one is breathing down her neck all the time. She gets to hang out with her friends here, laugh at each other's jokes, and most importantly, being here takes her mind off home. Here she doesn't feel like she is walking on eggshells all the time.

Even though she tries her best to stay busy, sometimes the voices manage to crawl into the back of her brain. *Maybe she deserved it, maybe she was getting*

punished for sins she didn't know she committed.

She shakes the thoughts out her head and looks up at the round, white clock hanging above the white board. Another school day is coming to an end. The class hadn't quite ended but everyone already started packing their bags.

What's the hurry, why are they so excited about going home? Why am I not excited?

Soon after, the final bell rings and everyone rushes out of the room to stand in line. Afreen doesn't rush, there was no point. She would be the last to leave anyway. She places her heavy school bag on her shoulders, stands at the back of the line and slowly follows everyone towards the noisy playground.

Car horns bellowing, parents calling out to their children, teachers yelling at the kids to stay in line and the *buas* running around with umbrellas helping children reach their guardians in the scorching heat.

Afreen is tired and hungry. She sits in the waiting room, the place where they make the children sit when everyone else goes home and the school is empty, silent. After waiting for more than an hour, she hears the school's small metal gate creak open. Her mother walks in.

It's three in the afternoon on a hot summer day, the sun is right above head. Afreen watches her mother's figure slowly get bigger as she walks across the concrete playing field towards the waiting room. One of the *buas* come up to her and announce, "Your mom's here."

Thank god.

Afreen pulls her heavy backpack onto her tiny shoulders again and walks to her mother. She doesn't ask for an explanation for being late again, she's just glad she can finally get out of the boiling heat. All Afreen looks forward to now is having lunch while watching her favorite TV show.

By the time they reach home, Afreen's stomach has started growling so loud that one could hear it if they were quiet enough. She goes to her

room to put her heavy backpack down and asks her mother for lunch. To her dismay, her mother replies that lunch is not yet ready since she had to rush to school to go get Afreen. She reassures a disappointed Afreen that food will be ready by the time Afreen finishes taking a shower.

Great. More excuses.

It is already pretty late, almost 4:30 in the afternoon. Afreen takes a shower and heads to the kitchen.

"Oh you're done showering already? A few more minutes."

The hunger had faded and she was starting to feel drowsy now. She had to wake up very early to go to school that day and was exhausted. It was getting increasingly difficult to keep her eyes open so she heads towards her bed and falls into a deep sleep as soon as she lays down.

Afreen dreams of a grey world. Everything a different shade of grey. Scary faces pop up and shoot her threatening looks. She is all alone. Helpless. Almost all her dreams are like this. She sometimes dreams of falling off cliffs or drowning in water.

Afreen slowly starts to wake up. Still half asleep, she can sense that she has been sleeping for quite sometime and it is probably night-time by now. She can hear two voices coming from somewhere close by. The voices are arguing, getting louder. Afreen is now awake and has realized the voices belong to her parents who are fighting again in the next room.

She had thought of getting up from bed to get dinner since she had already skipped lunch but that doesn't seem like a great idea anymore now that the fighting is getting worse. She stares at the door separating her and her parents' room and decides that she'll just try to go back to sleep and pretend she didn't hear anything. She doesn't want to get pulled into their fight like the last time. Everything seems scary and confusing, but keeping quiet seems to be the only option to the none year-old Afreen.

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